5280

THE DENVER MAGAZINE

TOP DOCTORS

THE LIST STARTS ON PAGE 62

Drs. Aubrey Armento (*left*) and Lauryn Roth of Children's Hospital Colorado

PLUS Meet The Local Medical Professionals Who Are Tailoring Treatments To Improve Women's Health ▶

ALMA FONDA FINA'S JOHNNY AND KASIE CURIEL THROW A SMOKIN' BACKYARD PARTY

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THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO HIKING AND BIKING THE HIGH LINE CANAL

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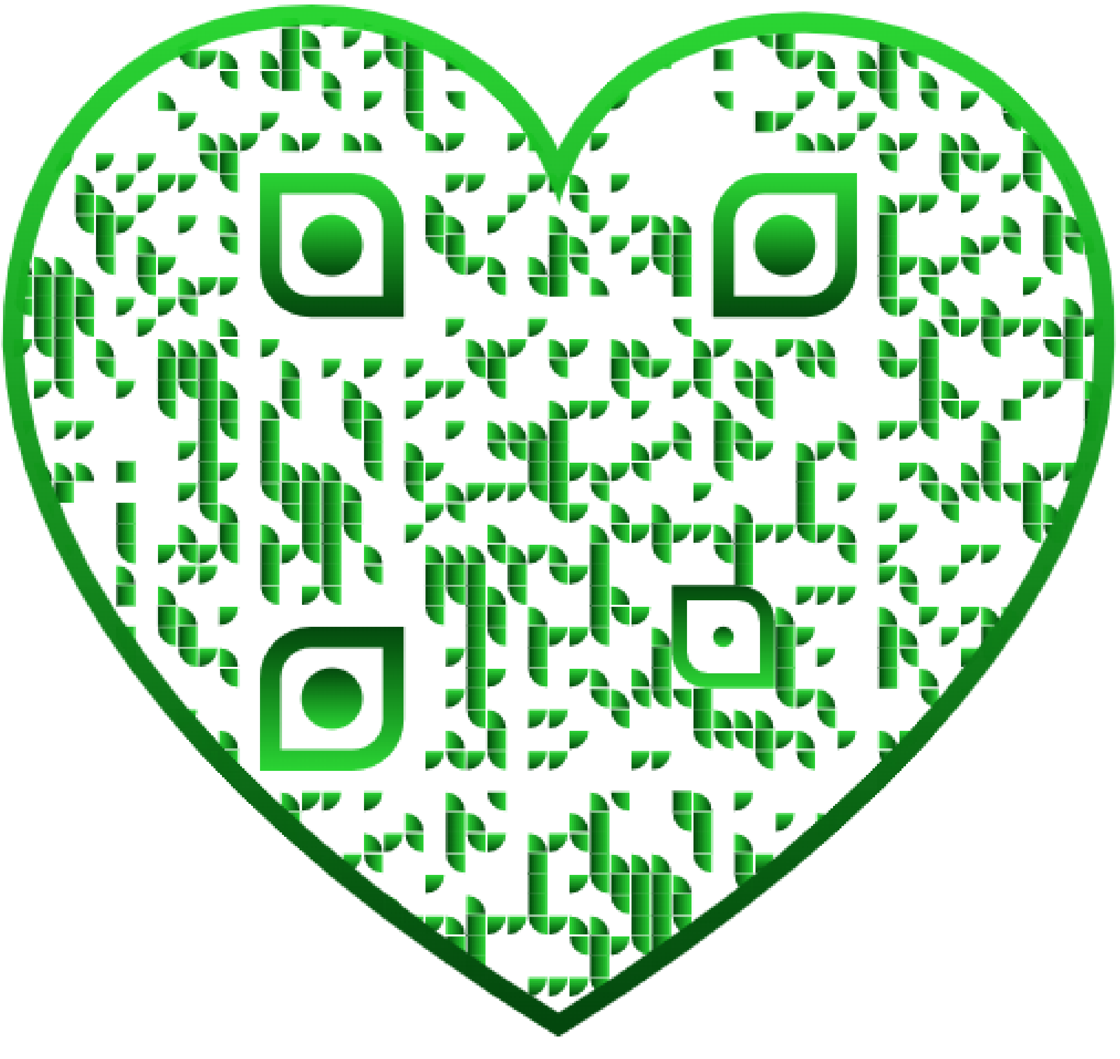

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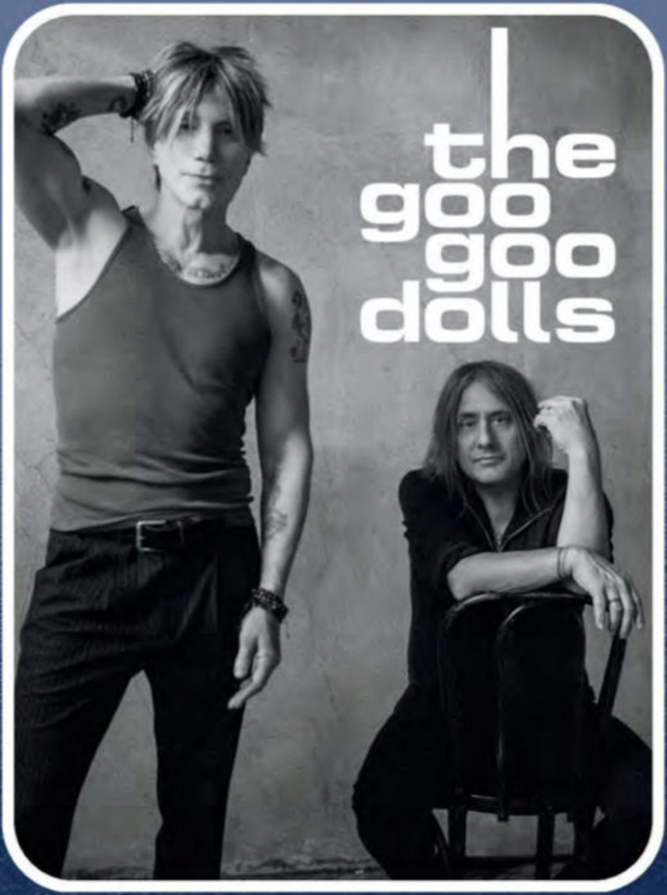

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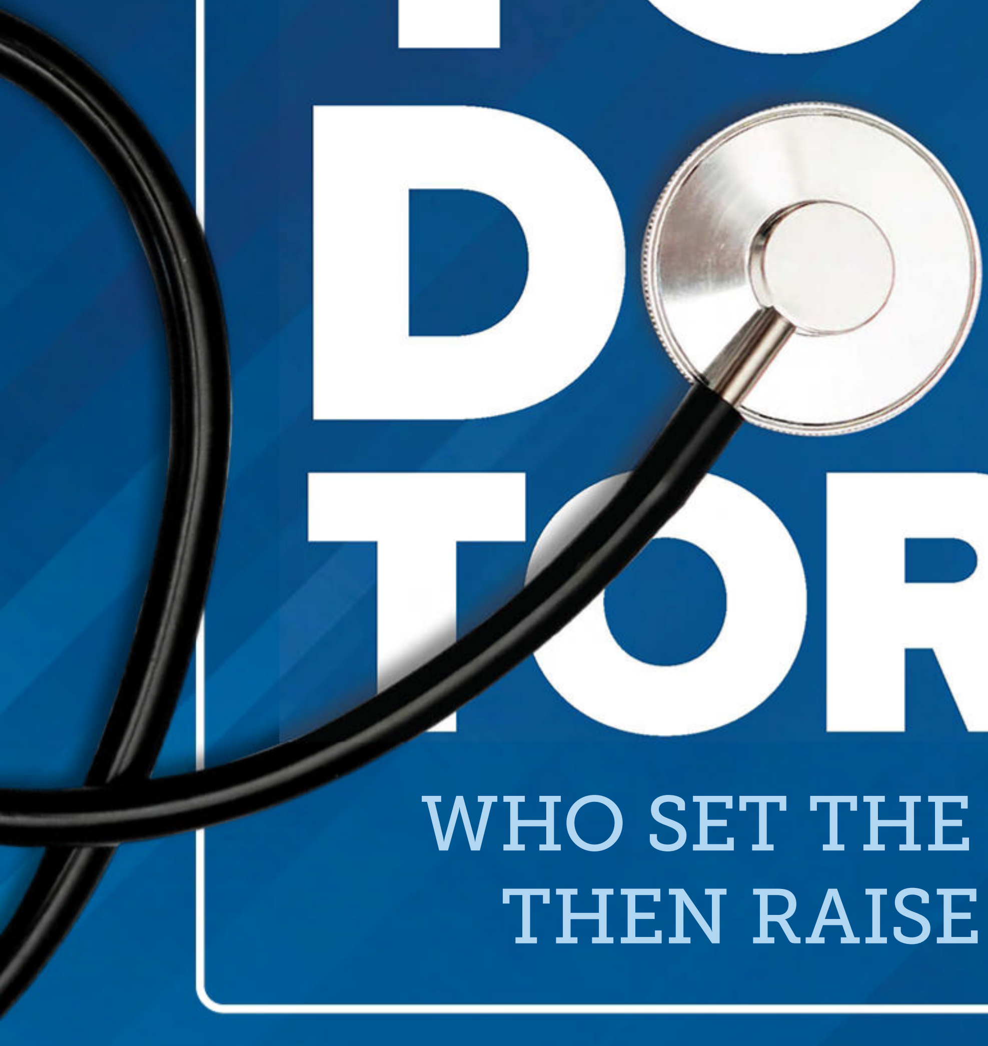

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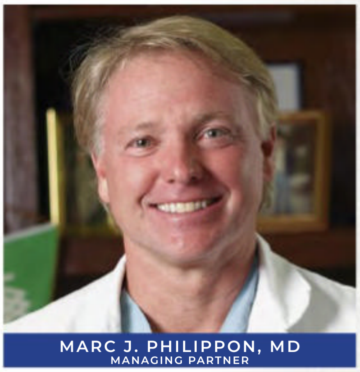
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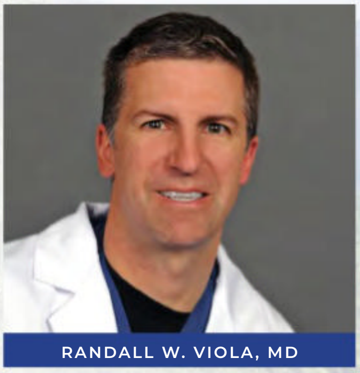
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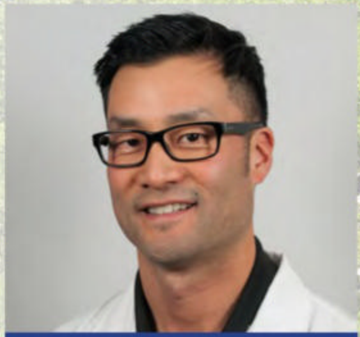
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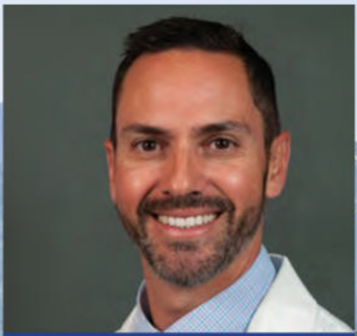
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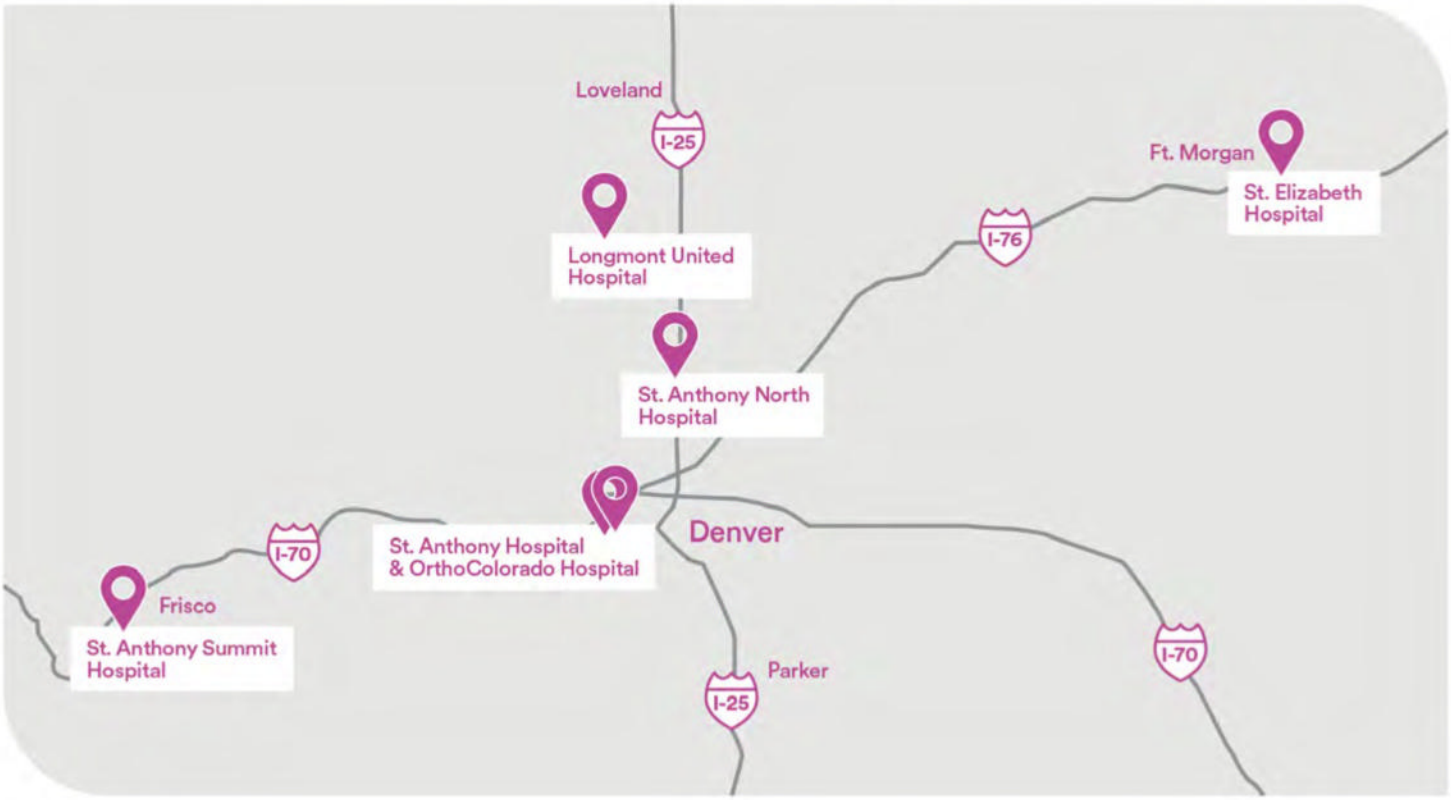
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5280 TOP DOCTOR 2025

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Dr. Weber is recognized for his meticulous attention to detail, comforting bedside manner, and ability to create dramatic–yet natural–transformations that never look "done." He has pioneered in-office facial cosmetic procedures, utilizing a delicate numbing technique for maximum comfort.

As a sought-after expert and physician trainer, Dr. Weber has lectured across the country and internationally on his innovative surgical techniques. His team, including master injector Mariah DeGusseme, NP, upholds his high standards, delivering nearly painless Botox and dermal filler treatments with minimal risk of bruising.

Dr. Weber's hundreds of five-star reviews reflect his exceptional results, calming presence and comprehensive care, making him Denver's trusted choice for natural facial enhancement in a safe, office-based setting. Whether you seek a small tweak or a transformative procedure, Weber Facial Plastic Surgery has the expertise to help you achieve your goals.

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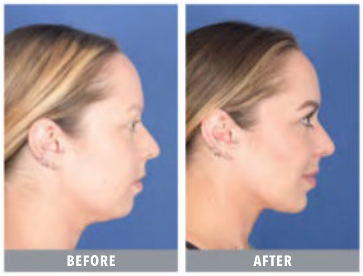

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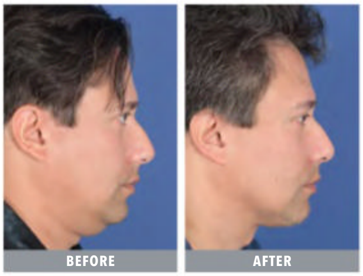

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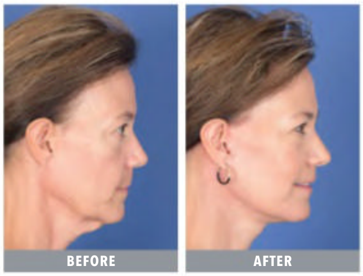

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At OrthoColorado Hospital, part of the CommonSpirit Health family, we believe in nurturing your active life. We're dedicated to providing innovative treatments that preserve your mobility and overall well-being, whether it's supporting your natural hip, maintaining spinal flexibility, strengthening your shoulder, or ensuring your new joint feels as natural as possible.

HIP PRESERVATION: NURTURING YOUR NATURAL HIP

Hip pain doesn't always require a total replacement. Our skilled specialists use advanced, minimally invasive techniques to preserve your natural hip, potentially delaying or even preventing major surgery.

We start with a comprehensive evaluation, including hands-on exams and advanced imaging, to understand your unique needs and diagnose issues like labral tears, femoroacetabular impingement (FAI), or hip dysplasia. We offer arthroscopic labral repair or reconstruction to restore smooth, natural movement. For FAI, we gently reshape the femoral head or socket rim to alleviate painful "pinching."

In cases of hip dysplasia, we perform periacetabular osteotomy (PAO) to reposition the socket – a procedure for which our expertise is recognized throughout the region.

SPINE CARE: BALANCING STABILITY AND FLEXIBILITY WITH COMPASSION

We understand that spinal fusion isn't always the answer. We offer a range of motion-preserving techniques designed to help reduce your pain while maintaining your spine's natural flexibility.

For certain cervical and lumbar conditions, artificial disc

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replacement (disc arthroplasty) may be a beneficial alternative. These advanced implants are designed to replicate the natural motion of your spine and help minimize stress on surrounding vertebrae. If nerve compression is contributing to your pain, our surgeons utilize minimally invasive methods to relieve pressure and restore motion with precision.

For those with more complex spinal conditions, such as deformities or multilevel degeneration, we offer advanced surgical solutions that prioritize motion preservation whenever possible. Using cutting-edge, minimally invasive techniques, our team tailors each procedure to your individual needs, ensuring the highest level of precision, safety, and personalized care."

SHOULDER SURGERY: RESTORING STRENGTH WITHOUT SACRIFICING MOTION

Shoulder issues can significantly limit your motion and quality of life. At OrthoColorado, we offer motion-sparing surgical options designed to restore strength, reduce pain, and support a more natural range of motion.

We specialize in advanced techniques like shoulder arthroscopy and rotator cuff repair, along with cutting-edge joint replacement options for those with arthritis or significant joint damage. For appropriate candidates, we offer the ROSA® robotic shoulder system, enhancing surgical precision and supporting improved joint function after surgery.

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When joint damage becomes limiting, replacement may be the best path forward. Our joint team is committed to providing personalized, motion-friendly solutions tailored to your unique lifestyle.

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YOUR CARE TEAM

Whatever journey brought you to us, our compassionate care team is here to partner with you on your path to recovery. We'll empower you to regain your mobility, confidently navigate daily routines, and leave feeling strong, prepared, and ready to embrace the activities you cherish.

WHY MOTION MATTERS: OUR GUIDING PHILOSOPHY

At OrthoColorado Hospital, motion preservation is more than just a surgical strategy – it's a reflection of our commitment to humankindness. Across hips, spines, shoulders, and joints, our experienced teams combine advanced techniques, robotics, and compassionate care to help you move freely and live fully.

Let us partner with you to help you return to doing what you love – with less pain, more confidence, and motion that lasts.

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Total Joint

Jared Foran, MD
Total Joint

Charles Gottlob, MD
Shoulder & Sports Medicine

Nimesh Patel, MD
Hip Preservation & Total Joint

Mark Robinson, MD
Spine

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Tacos topped with chef Johnny Curiel’s carnitas, cochinita pibil, frijoles con puerco, and rajas

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The Doctor Will Finally See You Now

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¡Viva La Fiesta!

Relaxing isn’t easy when you run four restaurants, but every summer Johnny and Kasie Curiel take time off to turn their backyard into a celebration of Mexican cuisine.

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The High Line Canal is stepping into the future with $100 million in improvements. Now is the time to (re)discover this 71-mile urban gem.

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Has David Roche Cracked The Code, Or Is He Just Another Crackpot?

The Boulder athlete claims to have developed a radical recipe to revolutionize long-distance running. Our writer decided to find out if Roche’s training program would make him faster on the trails—and, maybe, better at life.

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Five tips for cooking a simply perfect piece of meat in your own backyard.

ON THE COVER

Photograph by Sarah Banks

Cover: Wardrobe styling: Ashleigh Perri; set: Charli Ornett. This page, clockwise from top left: Sarah Banks; Kaylinn Gilstrap; Courtesy of National Sports Center for the Disabled; Courtesy of Denver International Airport

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Intermountain Health's 5280 MAGAZINE Top Docs

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At Intermountain Health, we believe outstanding care starts with exceptional doctors. We are proud to announce that several of our dedicated physicians have been recognized in the prestigious 5280 Top Docs list, an honor that celebrates excellence in medicine and trust among patients.

This recognition is a testament to the unwavering commitment of our doctors to providing compassionate, innovative, and personalized care that meets the highest standards. Whether it's addressing complex medical challenges or ensuring everyday wellness, our physicians go above and beyond to prioritize your health and well-being.

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5280

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Courtesy of Charity Huff

Forward Progress

Soon after our February issue hit newsstands (the one with the gorgeous pink mocktail on the cover), I received my first reader letter from a gentleman in Durango. He reached out to thank us for our story about Tracee Metcalfe. As an avid climber himself, he'd followed Metcalfe's career and wanted to celebrate with us her place in history as the first American woman to summit the 14 highest peaks in the world. To me, that's what makes *5280* special. Storytelling creates a collective experience that reaches across mountains and communities and helps us all feel tethered and proud to be in the same shared place.

In the seven months since I introduced myself as *5280*'s new CEO and publisher in these pages, I've had countless interactions with readers, business owners, and community leaders that have reaffirmed my belief in the value of independent, locally owned media. *5280* has long been my go-to source for what to do, where to go, and whom to know in Denver. I'm proud to be investing in our community by growing this beloved brand to serve more of you and to continue acting as a trusted tastemaker for our expanding readership.

One tangible way you can see that commitment? The magazine you hold in your hands has been upgraded to a higher quality paper and has even more pages filled with thoughtful journalism, make-you-want-to-be-there photography, and service-packed stories. We want the experience of reading *5280* to be a treat you look forward to every month: a moment to slow down and immerse yourself in the people and places that make Colorado so special.

Storytelling creates a collective experience that helps us all feel tethered and proud to be in the same shared place.

As you go about your day, we are there for you, too. I invite you to engage with our website, social media, and newsletters or attend one of our signature events (mark your calendar for 5280 Dines in October). These channels round out our mission to be the definitive guide to living your best, most informed and adventure-filled mile-high life. Keep an eye out. You'll see our iconic *5280* logo on billboards, on your streaming TV, and on your mobile phone: We recently launched our 5280 Everywhere campaign to reinforce our love for all things Denver.

Whether you're a longtime subscriber, recent transplant, or someone who picked this issue up off the newsstand or a friend's coffee table, I welcome you to come along with us as we write the next chapter in our story—and help you delight in your own.

CHARITY HUFF
CEO & Publisher

5280 DINES

COMING THIS OCTOBER

5280's annual celebration of the best restaurants in and around Denver returns this October! Experience exquisite menus from top local chefs and kitchens, delightful beverages, and so much more at this can't-miss fete crafted for connoisseurs of deliciousness.

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The Human Experience

^ ***5280* deputy editor Spencer Campbell's research duties for this issue included training on North Table Mountain for a 21-mile trail race in Granby.**

Struggling through postpartum depression. Zooming across a frozen Grand Lake landscape on an electric snowmobile. Biting into a viral $40 cheese pizza. Hiking in the remote Wheeler Geologic Area. Microdosing magic mushrooms. These are just a few of the things *5280* writers have experienced firsthand—and written about for the magazine, in first person—this year alone.

Recently, *Nieman Storyboard*, a Harvard University journalism magazine, asked *5280* senior staff writer Robert Sanchez about his decision to insert his own mushroom trip into a story (June's "The Shroom Boom") about psilocybin therapy in Colorado. "I think readers want to know who's delivering their information," Sanchez told *Nieman*. "That just completely destroys a barrier between the reader and the journalist, and I think that creates more trust."

In this issue, you'll find a packed lineup of that kind of intimate storytelling. In "Taking The High Trail" (page 78), freelance writer Jay Bouchard details his attempt to ride all 71 miles of the High Line Canal, including a mishap that ends with him carrying his bike across a creek. Our restaurant critic Amanda M. Faison describes both the Hokkaido scallop nigiri—"scored to create more surface area and nooks to catch the hints of citrus and crunchy salt"—at Temaki Den and her frustration with the RiNo spot's clunky QR code menu in "Open Secret" (page 40). As part of a report on how local health care pros are tailoring treatments to women's specific needs ("The Doctor Will Finally See *You* Now," page 54), *5280* senior editor Rose Cahalan shares her difficult fertility journey.

By far the sweatiest personal account, however, begins on page 88 with "Has David Roche Cracked The Code, Or Is He Just Another Crackpot?" In it, *5280* deputy editor Spencer Campbell adopts the Boulder ultrarunner's supposedly revolutionary methodology to train for a 21-mile Grand County trail race. He opens up about not just his physical pains, but also the stressors and insecurities of modern parenting and the toll his midlife quest takes on his marriage.

In a media environment that's increasingly filled with AI-generated content and influencers whose good opinions are paid for, I hope stories like Campbell's—filled with real blood, tears, laughs, and triumphs—continue to earn your trust. We may not be perfect, but whether plodding through the Rocky Mountains, wrestling with a digital menu at the latest sushi hot spot, or assessing the efficacy of magic mushrooms, we'll always be 100 percent human.

JESSICA LaRUSSO
Editor-in-Chief

jessica@5280.com

MARK ANTONATION
Food Editor

5280 photo shoots don't *always* involve taking mezcal shots off agave leaves, but when chef Johnny Curiel and his wife and business partner, Kasie, offered, food editor Mark Antonation and photo editor Charli Ornett obliged. At the 10-hour photo session for Antonation's recipe-filled "¡Viva La Fiesta!" (page 68), the Curiels, who own Michelin-starred Alma Fonda Fina, gave a behind-the-scenes taste of their annual whole-hog feast to the crew, which included photographer Aaron Colussi; Ornett, who strategically propped the setups with tile and dishware worthy of Curiel's Jalisco-style fare; and food stylist Veronica Spera. "After gallantly withstanding smoke and heat for solo shots at the grill, Johnny posed for one last photo uncorking a bottle of Champagne," Antonation says. "Then the skies opened up for a typical Colorado summer deluge, as if to say, 'That's a wrap!'" To make sure readers could actually pull off Johnny's recipes, Antonation cooked them himself during his own dinner party test run. (His favorite? The cochinita pibil, thanks to the achiote marinade.) It was a laborious but ultimately worthwhile process, and Antonation hopes readers will realize that cooking for a party can be as fun as the event itself. **"Allow time to enjoy the aha moments in the kitchen,"** he says. "Don't worry if the results don't look like our photos—unless you want to hire your own food stylist."

From top: James Stukenberg; Sarah Banks

DENVER
PLASTIC SURGERY
& AESTHETICS
DR. CHRISTINE RODGERS
DR. CECELIA NGUYEN

TOP DOCTORS
5280
2025
DENVER

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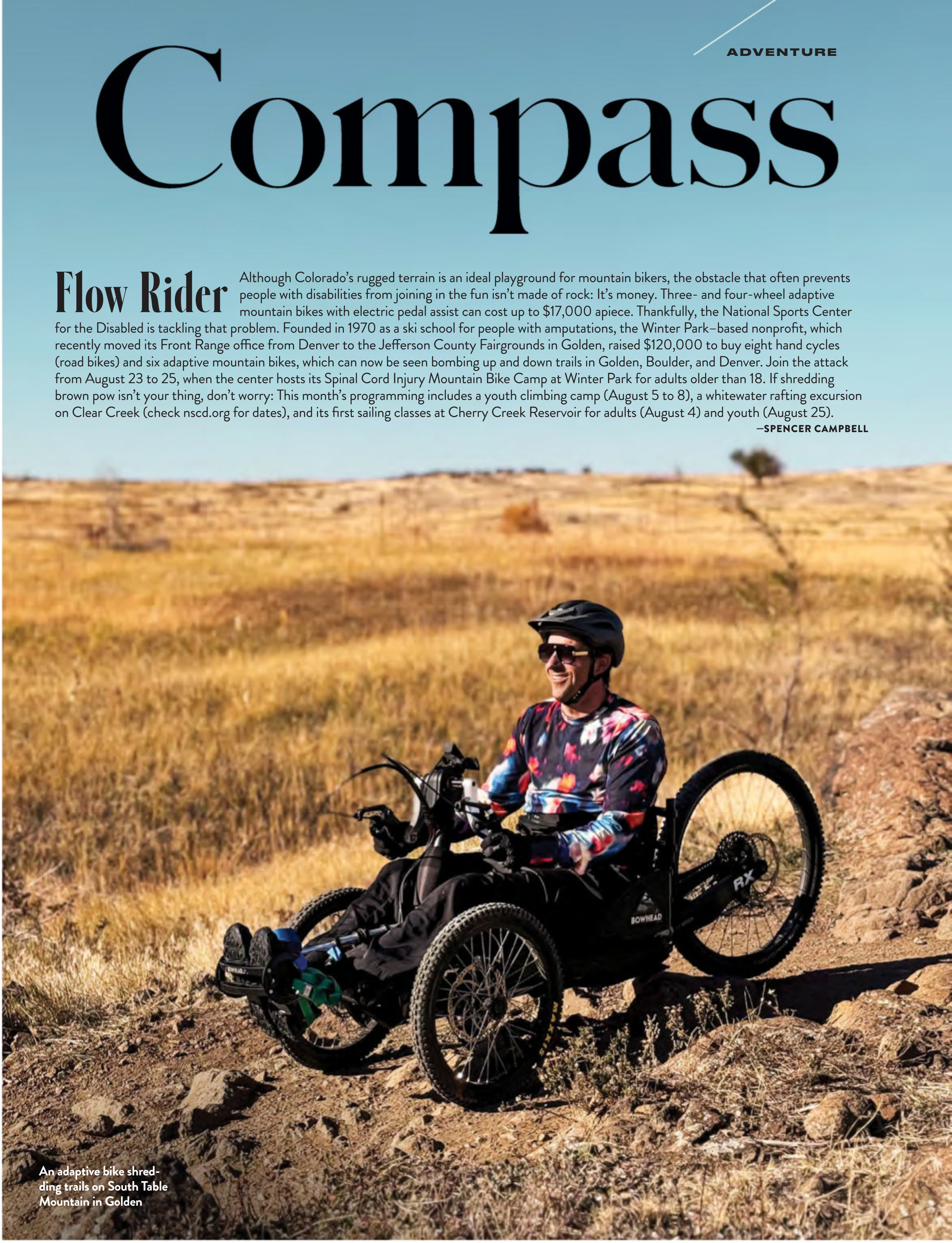
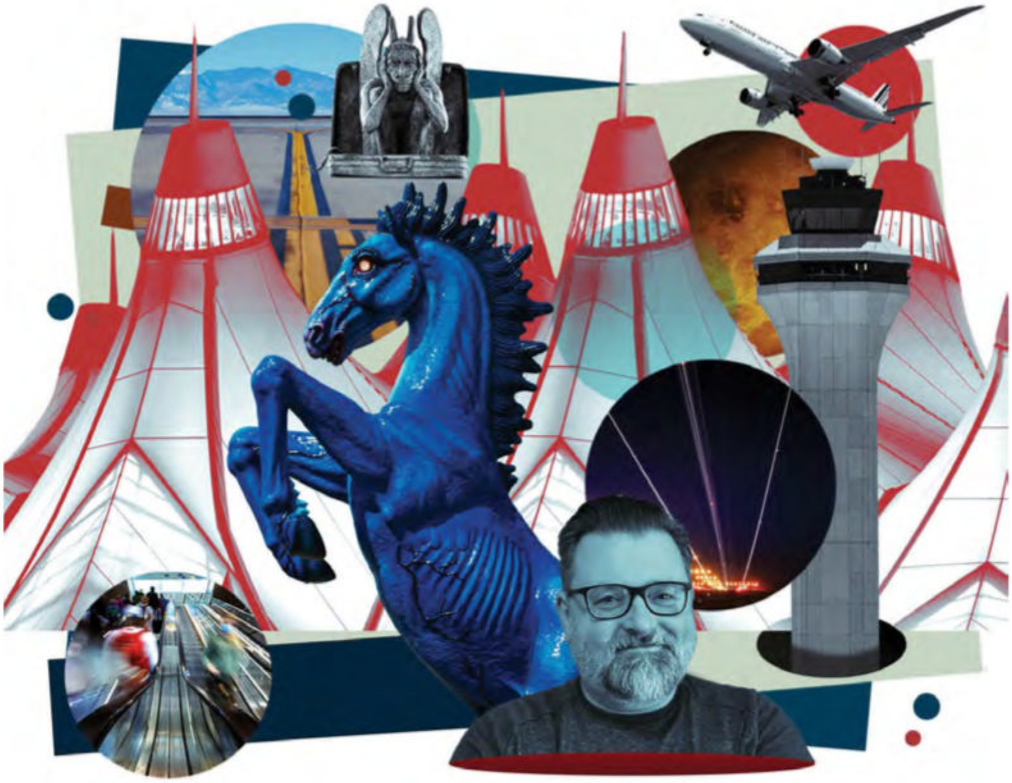
Although Colorado's rugged terrain is an ideal playground for mountain bikers, the obstacle that often prevents people with disabilities from joining in the fun isn't made of rock: It's money. Three- and four-wheel adaptive mountain bikes with electric pedal assist can cost up to $17,000 apiece. Thankfully, the National Sports Center for the Disabled is tackling that problem. Founded in 1970 as a ski school for people with amputations, the Winter Park–based nonprofit, which recently moved its Front Range office from Denver to the Jefferson County Fairgrounds in Golden, raised $120,000 to buy eight hand cycles (road bikes) and six adaptive mountain bikes, which can now be seen bombing up and down trails in Golden, Boulder, and Denver. Join the attack from August 23 to 25, when the center hosts its Spinal Cord Injury Mountain Bike Camp at Winter Park for adults older than 18. If shredding brown pow isn't your thing, don't worry: This month's programming includes a youth climbing camp (August 5 to 8), a whitewater rafting excursion on Clear Creek (check nscd.org for dates), and its first sailing classes at Cherry Creek Reservoir for adults (August 4) and youth (August 25).

—SPENCER CAMPBELL



An adaptive bike shredding trails on South Table Mountain in Golden

Courtesy of National Sports Center for the Disabled



^ **Teague Bohlen invents new DIA conspiracies in his latest novel, *Escaping Denver*.**

New Arrivals

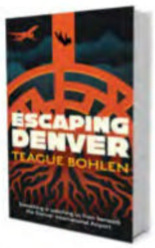
A hit podcast about Denver International Airport's conspiracy theories has spawned a wild new sci-fi novel (in which Bigfoot may or may not appear).

People started to suspect something was strange about Denver International Airport before construction began. Stapleton Airport in west Denver seemed to work—why did the city need a new one? *So the government can build a secret base underneath it*, some whispered. The conjecture grew after delays postponed DIA's completion for almost two years, and it became a full-throated conspiracy theory once the facility opened in 1995: Murals seemed to depict soldiers striking down children, and there was talk of a bunker complex below the terminal. The gigantic blue stallion with glowing red eyes that appeared near the entrance in 2008 didn't exactly silence the rumors.

DIA remains a fertile landmark for myth-making three decades after its first flight. In fact, Canadians Brady Roberts and Mike Howorun had never been to Colorado before launching *Escaping Denver*, their science-fiction podcast, in 2021. The friends and producing partners simply watched videos about the airport on YouTube and thought the location seemed ripe for a story. *Escaping Denver* follows two main characters, Noah and Sara, who wake up as prisoners under DIA. Rather than encountering Blucifer, the Illuminati, and other characters from the airport's rich history of conspiracy, Noah and Sara navigate shadow governments, aliens, and a deadly robot called the Puncher, among other spooky inventions. Although the show's sound effects are spare, Roberts and Howorun employ veteran actors, including Greta Carew-Johns, who plays Nora and has appeared on TV shows such as *Supergirl*. They also pack the sunken labyrinth with strange, *Lost*-style surprises, including an appearance by Bigfoot. The 52-episode series has racked up more than 2.75 million downloads.

This month, Roberts and Howorun will expand *Escaping Denver*'s universe by publishing a novel of the same name, timed to coincide with the release of the show's fifth and final season. They looked for a local author to write the book and settled on Teague Bohlen, associate professor of fiction at the University of Colorado Denver, whose first novel, *The Pull of the Earth*, won the Colorado Book Award for literary fiction in 2007. He'd never written sci-fi, but he's long been a fan of genre fiction. His home office is littered with lightsabers, and he bonded with Roberts and Howorun over their shared nostalgia of 1980s culture. *Escaping Denver* takes place in modern-day Colorado, but some listeners believe descriptions of the fictional complex indicate it was built four decades ago. "One of the things that plays a role in the novel is New Coke," Bohlen says. "Just the pure '80s sense of New Coke coming out and being a complete bomb."

Bohlen is cagey about the rest of the mysteries that will be revealed in the book, published by Oregon-based Blackstone Publishing, only saying the plot involves new characters. Rather than trying to leave DIA, they'll be seeking to enter the compound—at least until they encounter a few of the cryptids Bohlen has planted around the place. He also added some personal touches. DIA is just one piece of the enormous underground complex, and Bohlen's characters access the facility near Ward, a city the author has visited often, almost 60 miles northwest of the airport. "Up there, around the Brainard Lake area, there's a lot of government land that is pretty pristine," Bohlen says. "You can hide a lot up there." **–SC**



3 REAL DIA CONSPIRACIES—DEBUNKED!

A time capsule installed in 1995 references the "New World Airport Commission"—an evil-sounding group that really just helped organize the airport's opening.

DIA's runways appear to make a swastika, but the formation simply permits more than one plane to take off at once and reduces shutdowns in case of strong winds.

Construction delays led some to speculate that a network of bunkers was being built. It doesn't exist (or maybe that's what the government wants you to think).

PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY SEAN PARSONS

Courtesy of Blackstone Publishing (book). Photo illustration source images: Courtesy of Denver International Airport (horse, escalator, light-rail lines, runway, gargoyle, airplane, tower, airport); Getty Images (moon); Stephanie March/Courtesy of Blackstone Publishing (author)

The most Top Doctors in Colorado

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[1] NCQA is a third-party organization that receives both clinical quality information (HEDIS) and member survey (CAHPS) feedback to rate health plans nationwide. Kaiser Permanente was one of the highest-rated plans in Colorado in 2024-2025.
[2] At-home urgent care offerings through DispatchHealth are available in Denver/Boulder only.

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Unsung Heroines

As the Colorado Women's Hall of Fame turns 40 this month, we celebrate some of the state's overlooked women.

In the 1970s, Denver bank executive M.L. Hanson encouraged a friend's daughter to write a school report on notable Colorado women. There was just one hitch: The girl's history textbook didn't mention any. "If women aren't even being featured in school, they're just totally invisible," Hanson says. "Colorado's history was incomplete." The omission inspired Hanson to found the Colorado Women's Hall of Fame in 1985, and the nonprofit inducted 24 women its first year. Since then, 181 more have joined their prestigious ranks. Some of the inductees, such as Margaret "Molly" Brown and Dana Crawford, have become household names in Denver, but many others remain unknown. Ahead of the hall's invitation-only 40th anniversary gala on August 12, we introduce you to three lesser-known inductees whose contributions to the Centennial State were anything but small.

—BARBARA O'NEIL

MY LIFE
S NOT
OR SALE!

Laura Ann Hershey

INDUCTED
2016

When Hershey arrived at Colorado College as a student in 1979, one of her classes and her student newspaper meetings had to be moved because she couldn't access the buildings in her wheelchair. Hershey spent her life pushing back against those and myriad other barriers through poetry, journalism, and activism. She directed Denver's Commission for People with Disabilities, educating developers on accessible housing, and penned a disability-focused column for the *Denver Post.* But perhaps her most lasting legacy is "You Get Proud by Practicing," a poem on self-worth that's still often read aloud at rallies and conferences.

Ruth Cousins Denny

INDUCTED
2022

Born in Missouri in 1920, Cousins Denny was the granddaughter of enslaved people and experienced racism as a child—starting when store clerks refused to serve her family. She moved to Denver in the 1950s and lived through segregation, once being relegated to the balcony of a local movie theater. In response, she co-founded Denver's chapter of the Congress of Racial Equality, organizing a protest against a downtown department store that refused to hire Black employees and leading a Colorado contingent to the 1963 March on Washington, D.C.

Dr. Frances McConnell-Mills

INDUCTED
1996

Born in Monument in 1900, McConnell-Mills graduated from high school at 15 and earned a master's degree in chemistry at 19. But when she expressed interest in medical school, her father refused to pay; he was convinced the coursework would be too demanding for a woman. Undeterred, she graduated at 25 from what was then called the University of Colorado Medical School and went on to become the city of Denver's first female toxicologist (and may have been the nation's first female forensic pathologist). In that role, she helped prove serial killer Anna Hahn had poisoned her traveling companion in Colorado Springs, which ultimately led to Hahn's conviction. But McConnell-Mills made her biggest mark on the medical profession by founding a now-defunct school for medical technologists at Denver General Hospital (now Denver Health) in the 1940s, which focused on training women in the field.

Clockwise from top left: Denver Public Library Special Collections, WH2274-2016-227; Courtesy of Colorado Women's Hall of Fame (2)

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Soccer Is For Lovers

Cat Long loved soccer—and they were good at it, too. After starring at Fort Collins' Rocky Mountain High School, in 2005 Long was recruited to play at a Division I university on the East Coast, where they became a starter on the women's team. During their sophomore year, however, they say they were sexually assaulted by a member of the men's side.

The incident pushed Long to transfer to the University of Colorado Boulder and ended their collegiate soccer career. They tried rec leagues, but the men on Long's teams rarely passed to them—or any female-presenting player. Fed up with the toxic masculinity, they called Alayna Shaw, a childhood friend who, like Long, had also since come out as queer. "'I want to play soccer. I love playing soccer with you,'" Long told her. "'Let's start a team.'"

The Lipstick Lovers played their first game in early 2024. What began as a single rec team for queer, nonbinary, and trans players in and around Denver has expanded into six outdoor and eight indoor squads. They formed their own league, also called Lipstick Lovers, later in the year. "Most of the time, we're dancing around or yelling or playing on each other's teams," Long says, "and it's so much fun."

The sense of connection extends off the field, too. The Lipstick Lovers hosted a roller-skating night to kick off Pride month in June, and players regularly meet up for dinner post-game. Like Long, many have had traumatic experiences and found the league only after playing on teams on which they felt isolated as the only queer person or person of color. "Those [wounds] are clearly still there, but everything else that we're creating here is bigger than that," Long says. "That's what's been so beautiful about it." —**CASSIS TINGLEY**

The Lipstick Lovers' eight-week summer season ends August 4. Watch their season finale at 6 p.m. at Verbena Park and follow them on Instagram (@denverlipsticklovers).

Credits Tk

PHOTOGRAPH BY SARAH BANKS

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Match Point

Tennis is stopping the music—not the marriage.

Alaina Moore and Patrick Riley knew ending their band, Tennis, might spark rumors. "The word 'breakup' in the context of a married duo was going to be so terrifying," Moore says. But after 17 years of marriage, 15 years as a band, seven albums, and a run that's included late-night TV and sold-out shows, they're simply prioritizing their relationship, which began when they were students at the University of Colorado Denver. The indie-pop twosome released its final album, *Face Down in the Garden*, this spring, and the accompanying tour stops at Denver's Mission Ballroom on August 26. "It's going to be bittersweet," Moore says of the show. "I'll probably cry." Before the waterworks begin, we caught up with Moore to find out what it's like to split while staying together. –**ROBERT SANCHEZ**

^ Alaina Moore and Patrick Riley met as students at the University of Colorado Denver.

Darren Vargas/Courtesy of Tennis

5280: How has your marriage evolved since the band began?

Alaina Moore: My marriage to Patrick is the greatest work of my life, and it's the thing I'm most proud of. I've never seen a marriage like ours. I think our relationship has evolved the most because of the band. We had that realization while we were working on our most recent record. Our marriage unfolded against the backdrop of touring and making albums, and it has really shifted our connection to each other. It's special to find a creative partner and a life partner. I think that's really profound.

It's probably not easy.

It's hard. It's difficult to navigate. That's part of the decision to retire from the band, because we felt like we wanted to let our marriage breathe outside of this giant endeavor we've put our effort into maintaining for the past 15 years. Our dynamic has put a lot of pressure on our relationship. There's no work-life balance. We can't ever turn it off.

How do you maintain a marriage and still allow yourselves to be critical of each other's work?

I think you have to love the person more than you love your own ego. I remember the first time we had an argument in the studio. It was over a guitar solo I wanted [Patrick] to play, and he didn't want to play it. I stormed out and called my mom. She was like, "What do you love more: your husband or the guitar solo?" I went back in and told him I loved him more than a guitar solo. He was so touched that he played the solo.

Why end the band now?

We felt like if we kept pushing this, we would start diluting the quality of our work—that it would feel forced. And, right now, it didn't. With *Face Down in the Garden*, the songs were inside us and needed to come to light. At the same time, we knew we were getting to the end. Like, the well is running dry.

What do you want your fans to remember about Tennis?

I want it to age well. We've always wanted to make music that's timeless. I want you to be able to listen to us in five years or 20 years. I hope that's the legacy we've established. Fans connect with our story and our marriage, and I feel like we've done our best to let people into our world, because it is special. Patrick and I have built something unusual together. We want to preserve that memory for people.

What's next for you two?

One thing that bonds us is that we have always had a shared goal or a dream. Even though we're stepping away from Tennis, there will be a new dream to replace it. I don't see it as being music any time soon. I'd like to write a book. Patrick wants to build a house. He wants to work with his hands and see something tangibly come to life. I would be very happy if we do something that displaces the band in significance, but I don't care if the next chapter is widely known or outward facing. I'm completely satisfied with everything we've achieved.

Back, L to R: Jeremy Rieks, PA; Jeffrey C. Berliner, DO; Grace Nolde-Lopez, NP; Andrew Park, MD; Mark R. Johansen, MD; Benjamin Ingraham, DO

Front, L to R: Morgan Brubaker, DO; Aslan, service dog in training; Margaret Jones, MD, MPH; Eric T. Spier, MD; Doggo, CNS mascot; William M. Scelza, MD; Christina Draganich, DO; Miracle, service dog in training; Michael Makley, MD

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From top: Fiore dolce piccante, Tomme de Savoie, Époisses, and Sequatchie Cove Creamery Coppinger

Say Cheese

An oh-so-Parisian chalkboard outside Goudy's Deli and Market beckons you into a world far from its Washington Park environs, where sandwich makers wielding locally made baguettes greet you over tempting pastry cases. Place an order, then follow your nose past shelves of European pantry staples and a freezer packed with house-made sausages toward the intoxicating aroma of Goudy's 198-square-foot refrigerated cheese room. There, shelves stacked with wheels, bricks, and wedges from 10 countries give dairy devotees almost too much choice. For guidance, turn to co-owners Christophe Goudy, whose family ran a meat production company near Toulouse, France, and his wife, Celine, from coastal Normandy. After the couple moved to California in 2013, Celine launched a charcuterie company based on Christophe's family recipes; they relocated to Colorado four years ago. The Goudys met compatriot Yvan Lehuerou of Boulder cheese destination Le Frigo while selling fresh sausages and pate wholesale and at local farmers' markets. The trio formed a partnership to open their Denver shop. When you go, don't forget to bring a fleece so you can linger over the Limberger and gawk at the goat Gouda before absconding with your haul. *1207 E. Alameda Ave.*

—**MARK ANTONATION**

PHOTOGRAPH BY SARAH BANKS

Open Secret

Even tucked away in a refurbished RiNo warehouse, Temaki Den's seafood and sushi rice demand attention. –AMANDA M. FAISON

From left: Temaki Den chef and owner Kenta Kamo; salmon, tuna, and scallop nigiri, and mackerel oshizushi

Although Temaki Den has been open since October 2020, there's still some IYKYK surrounding the RiNo destination, where executive chef Kenta Kamo spins magic and craft. The restaurant, initially a collaboration between Ototo veteran Kamo and Toshi Kizaki (who oversees the Den Corner restaurants Ototo, Sushi Den, and Izakaya Den with his brother Yasu), bears the chefs' hallmarks of pristine fish and perfect rice. But first, you have to find the place.

For starters, it's one of only two restaurants rattling around on the "hall" side of the Source Hotel & Market Hall on RiNo's Brighton Boulevard. Park in the garage behind the building and let us know how long it takes you to find your way via stairs, elevator, and ramp to the restaurant. Once inside, though, you might be surprised to find the cavernous center of the hall awash in sushi obsessives milling about, eager to grab a seat well before the sushi bar opens for happy hour at 4:30 p.m.

Your journey and the wait will be worth it, though: Absolutely no one does rice better than Den Corner and Temaki Den. "Rice is the most difficult part of sushi," Kamo says. "There is a saying in the sushi world, 'Rice is life,' and most chefs will tell you 80 percent of importance in sushi is rice." Not a single grain here is under- or overcooked, or packed so loosely it falls from a bite or so tightly that it becomes gluey. The rice isn't a method of delivery; it's a star.

Get your first taste with the restaurant's namesake temaki, handrolls that can be ordered individually or, during lunch or happy hour, as sets of three ($15), four ($19), or five ($24). If these sound skippable, ignore that urge and order anyway. The nori wrapper has a slight snap and crunch, and the rolls are shaped like cigars instead of cones to ensure even distribution of ingredients in every bite. My favorites

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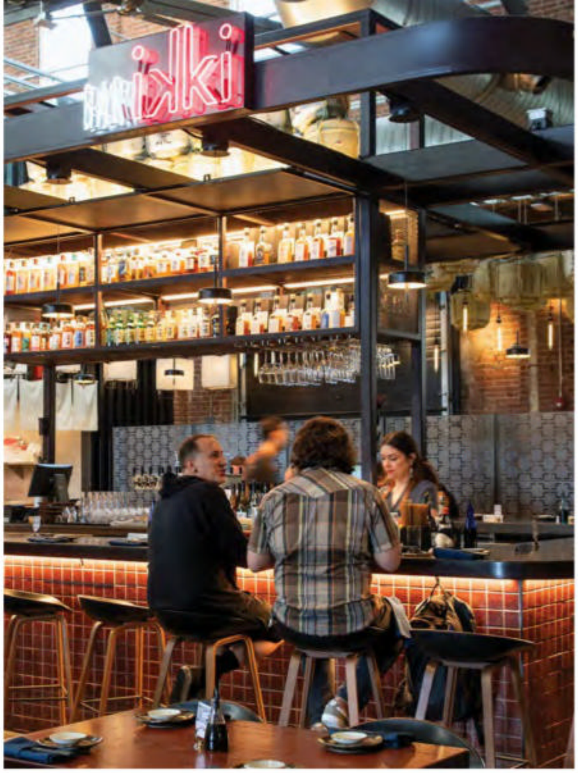

are the slightly fiery red shrimp, the freshly chopped and flawlessly spicy yellowtail, and salmon with crunchy fried shallots.

You can't go to Temaki Den without ordering the oshizushi ($4 each, $3 during happy hour), an old art form in which layers of rice and fish are pressed into rectangular molds and garnished, right before serving, with a soy aïoli-esque sauce that bubbles under a blowtorch's blast. "Oshizushi is a good way to have...creativity while being able to stay somewhat true to tradition and educate guests about the history of sushi," Kamo says.

The pressing method adds toothsome density to the textures and yields nigiri so good that diners are limited to four pieces each during happy hour. The sweet and creamy salmon is more popular, but the rich, buttery mackerel is a staff favorite.

Once you've sampled your way through the happy hour menu, it's on to the Hokkaido scallop nigiri ($4.25 each) topped with yuzu salt and a squeeze of lemon. I could eat a dozen of these beauties, each scallop scored to create more surface area and nooks to catch the hints of citrus and crunchy salt. If you want, you can splurge on the omakase option, which isn't a set amount of courses or a set price; instead, you choose the pacing and the fish keeps coming until you wave the white flag.

Although the multiple forms of sushi and sashimi are the obvious focus here, there are a couple of sleeper items to look out for, first among them the spinach goma-ae ($5). The deep green twirl of steamed spinach tossed in a lusty sesame-dashi sauce isn't the prettiest dish, but it has serious umami punch. The shoyu-butter scallops ($12) come served on a large half-shell bathed in a cozy sauce. Don't let it go to waste—dip your nigiri into it or sip it from the shell.

That last tip came from our astute server, because even when you sit at the sushi counter, there's very little interaction with Kamo and his army of sushi chefs stationed in the well. They are there to swoosh their gloriously sharp knives through jeweled fish, form perfect globs of rice with their fingers, and combine the two to create bite-size masterpieces.

Chitchat, though, comes from the wonderfully knowledgeable and effusive waitstaff. That good energy even has the power to gloss over slight missteps, such as a botched order. I certainly wasn't mad when a couple of salmon oshizushi showed up by mistake, but I was pleased when our server noticed the error and quickly placed two of the correct bites—clean and peppy crème fraîche salmon gilded with roe ($5)—in front of us.

My only real gripe is the QR code menu (in use at the time this review went to print), written such that it creates a chaotic scroll of choices, all but requiring diners to repeatedly pick up and put down their phones. When everything else about Temaki Den's service is practiced and quietly thoughtful, the hiccup stands out. But this minor quibble certainly didn't keep me from planning a return visit before I even paid the bill.

^

From top: **Temaki Den's bar; a tuna handroll; Odell's Bagel chef-owner Miles Odell**

TEMAKI DEN

The Source Hotel
& Market Hall
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temakiden.com

The Draw: Showstopping temaki and nigiri at excellent prices; a happy hour that's unparalleled in its generous offerings

The Drawback: The QR code menu is clunky; it's better to hail a ride-share than navigate the parking garage

Noise: Low to medium

Don't Miss: Oshizushi, spinach goma-ae, temaki, Hokkaido scallop nigiri, shoyu-butter scallop

COUNTER ACTION

Turning the reins over to the chef has been a thing, well, forever, but suddenly it's *the* way to dine. Here, a few local standouts in the omakase style. –AMF

Sushi by Scratch Restaurant blazed onto Larimer Square in January, despite its hidden entrance inside NADC Burger. Once there, you'll realize the hype isn't just puffery—it's stellar and, honestly, at $195 per person, well priced. Ten seats face a counter where chefs create, narrate, and serve 17 courses. Come early: A welcome drink and canapés served 30 minutes before reservations are included. *1441 Larimer St.*

If Sushi Den is at the center of Denver's sushi universe, **Kizaki**, the recently debuted omakase concept down the block from the flagship, is its newest star. With two intimate seatings a night ($225 per person), Toshi Kizaki's 20 (plus or minus) masterful courses of raw, cured, and dry-aged fish are an exquisite and intellectual indoctrination into Edo-mae technique. *1551 S. Pearl St.*

Every Thursday through Sunday night, West Highland's **Odell's Bagel** transforms into a kaiseki dining experience from chef-owner Miles Odell, who spent three years in Japan learning the country's foodways. Odell weaves alternating elements of vegetable and protein, cold and hot, and raw and cooked into a multicourse menu ($175 per person) heavy on seafood but with local touches. *3200 Irving St.*

Courtesy of Jeff Fierberg (Odell's Bagel)

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The Woman Who Doesn't Exist

Everyone agrees 30-year-old Abigail Colón was born in Colorado. So why won't the state give her a birth certificate? **BY SPENCER BAILEY**

Abigail Colón and her husband, Eythan McKinnon, had just returned from their honeymoon in South Carolina when they walked into a red brick courthouse in Waynesboro, Georgia, ready to make it official. At the clerk's desk, they asked for a marriage license. No problem, the clerk said. All they needed to do was fill out a short form and show proof of identification. Abigail nodded. Eythan smiled politely.

Four and a half years later, in early 2025, Abigail and Eythan are sitting across from me at a diner outside of Augusta, where they now live. We order waffles and breakfast sandwiches over the noise of the bustling kitchen and Saturday morning crowd. "Obviously, we're not legally married," Eythan says. His name is not on their daughter's birth certificate either, Abigail adds, nodding to the toddler squirming in her high chair, reaching for a water cup. The state rejected the paternity form for the same reason it wouldn't grant her a marriage license: Abigail doesn't have a government-issued ID.

Born just outside of Colorado Springs, Abigail was delivered not at a hospital, but in a midwife's home to parents who chose not to register her birth with the government. Without the right paperwork from her childhood, the state refuses to give her a birth certificate, leaving the now 30-year-old without a legal identity. And Colorado is fighting in court to keep it that way.

AFTER BREAKFAST we move to a nearby coffeeshop, where Abigail hands Eythan a thick King James Bible. He eases it out of its box. The binding is split, and the edges are worn. "Our Family Bible" is spelled out in gold lettering on its tattered cover. "Be very careful with it," Abigail tells me. I turn to the third page, where, written in cursive black ink, is the earliest proof of existence for the woman across the table: "Abigail Rose Colón, Dec. 8, 1994, Woodland Park, Colorado."

Abigail's father, Alfred Colón Jr., moved his family to Colorado Springs in the early 1990s. The son of Cuban American immigrants,

Abigail Colón near her home in Augusta, Georgia

PHOTOGRAPHY BY KAYLINN GILSTRAP

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The person who coined the term "Great Plains" got one thing right. They're great. But that second word—plain—is just plain wrong. They should have been called the Great Stunningly Majestic and Shockingly Gorgeous Landforms or something, because "plain" just doesn't capture the way they knock your socks off. So pack some extra socks and visit Nebraska. **It's everything you were unexpecting.**

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Alfred was born in New York City but returned to his parents' home country in 1960 after Fidel Castro came to power; Alfred's father believed the Communist leader was "the great liberator." As soon as the Colóns got off the plane, however, the Cuban government confiscated their life savings and sent then-seven-year-old Alfred to a military school. The family escaped back to the United States with the help of the Swiss Embassy, but the experience stayed with Alfred.

He became a devout Christian in his 20s, when an evangelical movement swept through Massachusetts, where he lived at the time. Eventually he came to believe Social Security numbers were the mark of the beast mentioned in the Book of Revelation. He stopped using his own in 1983. By the time Alfred and his wife, Dawn, moved to Colorado, he no longer trusted doctors or hospitals. "Jesus was [our] family physician," Alfred says today. Birth certificates, meanwhile, represented enslavement to the government.

After moving to Colorado, the Colóns started attending church in Woodland Park, a mountain town about 20 miles northwest of Colorado Springs. Dawn was pregnant, and a friend from the congregation introduced them to a midwife named Dorothy Nott who helped deliver the baby. They named her Abigail. Dorothy's daughter, Molly, remembers Woodland Park as a town split between "mainstream families" and a small community of Christian fundamentalists who wanted to "answer to God and not the government." If the Colóns intended to have Abigail "under the radar," Molly says, "I'm sure my mom was the type of person that would have been obliged to [do] that."

> "Jesus was [our] family physician."

The Colóns didn't remain in Colorado for long. Abigail lived in more than a dozen places during her childhood. "I guess [my father] was scared that his children were gonna get taken away because of his beliefs," Abigail says. She was soon joined by three younger siblings, none of whom were born in a hospital or got birth certificates. "I was born in the back seat of a converted Greyhound bus we were living in at the time," Abigail's brother Daniel says. His father helped deliver him while being coached by a midwife over the phone.

Alfred was also suspicious of schools and never enrolled any of his children. Daniel describes his childhood as living "outside of society, just a bunch of ghosts meandering through life, just barely getting by."

When Abigail was about 14 or 15 years old and living with her family near Fort Pierce, Florida, she and her father got into an argument. He told his daughter she was no longer welcome in his house. Abigail stuffed clothes and food into a backpack and walked 13 miles to the nearest Army recruitment center. "She's like four-foot-11 or five-foot-tall," Daniel says, "but she's got the attitude of a six-foot-two boxer." When Abigail walked in, the enlistment officer sighed—obviously, she was too young to join—and asked for a birth certificate, Social Security number, and a parental consent form. Abigail had no idea what any of those things were.

Back at her house, her mother revealed that, as far as the government was concerned, Abigail *was* a ghost. "There's no record of Abby anywhere in a hospital, anywhere on medical records, or anywhere in school," Alfred told me, "because we believe in the sovereignty of the

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family." Abigail's grandfather threatened legal action if her father did not allow her to move back in. Alfred relented. "My father hated my grandparents," Abigail says.

ABIGAIL LEFT HER parents' home for good when she was 20. She found a job cleaning hotel rooms and was paid under the table, but she couldn't rent a house because she didn't have a photo ID. "I was homeless for a while," Abigail told me. She eventually moved into a friend's camper outside of Linden, Tennessee. She lived there and rode her bike 14 miles one way to work for four months.

Abigail decided she needed a driver's license, but first she needed a birth certificate. When she was 16 or 17, she had begun sending applications to Colorado's office of vital records, a division of the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, which required her to provide at least two documents that prove her date of birth, place of birth, father's name, and mother's name. One of the two documents must have been created during the first decade of Abigail's life. She submitted papers with all the right information, but none of them were from before she turned 10. Colorado denied her applications.

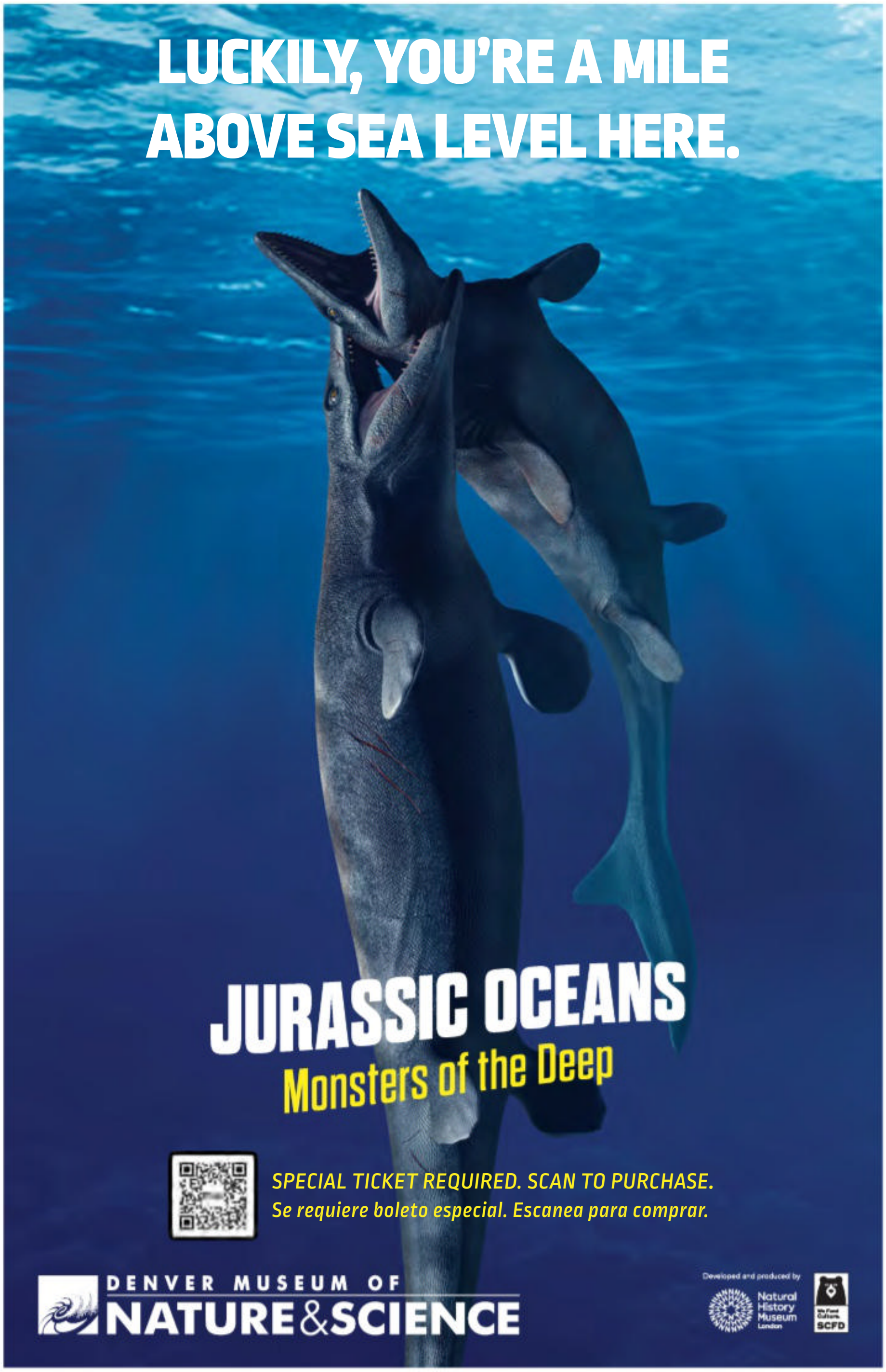
Abigail met Eythan through Instagram in 2017. After they started dating, he began calling the state every month to ask if there was any progress on his girlfriend's latest application. There rarely was. Eythan soon realized that, like many people caught in an endless loop of government bureaucracy, Abigail needed a lawyer.

"Stateless" is the legal term for a person whom no government recognizes as its citizen and is usually an immigration problem: Neither the United States nor the country the immigrant comes from claims them, leaving them in limbo. But there is also a group of people scattered throughout the country who were born here and have "no evidence to prove that they legally exist as people," says Samantha Sitterley, an attorney with United Stateless, an advocacy organization. They cannot get a birth certificate, photo ID, Social Security number, or passport. Unregistered Americans, like Abigail, are citizens in name only. There are no official estimates on how many unregistered Americans there are, but over the past six years, 84 of the 347 Coloradans who filed for a delayed birth certificate were rejected by the state.

After several denied applications, Abigail enlisted the help of Colorado Legal Services, a nonprofit that provides free legal aid. In October 2022, Abigail's attorneys filed another application for a delayed birth certificate. It, too, was denied. Abigail and her attorney, Casey Sherman, say they've searched everywhere for a document created within the first 10 years of Abigail's life. "The earliest record of her existence is from age 11," Sherman says. That document is a report from child protective services in Florida, which looked into the Colóns after receiving an anonymous report of child neglect. Investigators closed the case after finding no evidence to support the allegations.

"CDPHE has essentially asked Abigail to build a time machine and go back and undo her parents' decisions that they made on her behalf as a child," Sherman says. A CDPHE spokesperson says privacy laws won't allow officials to discuss Abigail's case, adding they are "committed to working with individuals to find a viable solution that also protects the integrity of the records and follows regulations." The agency couldn't find a solution for Abigail, though, so she sued the CDPHE in district court in July 2023.

Abigail would seem to have an important supporter in her quest for a birth certificate: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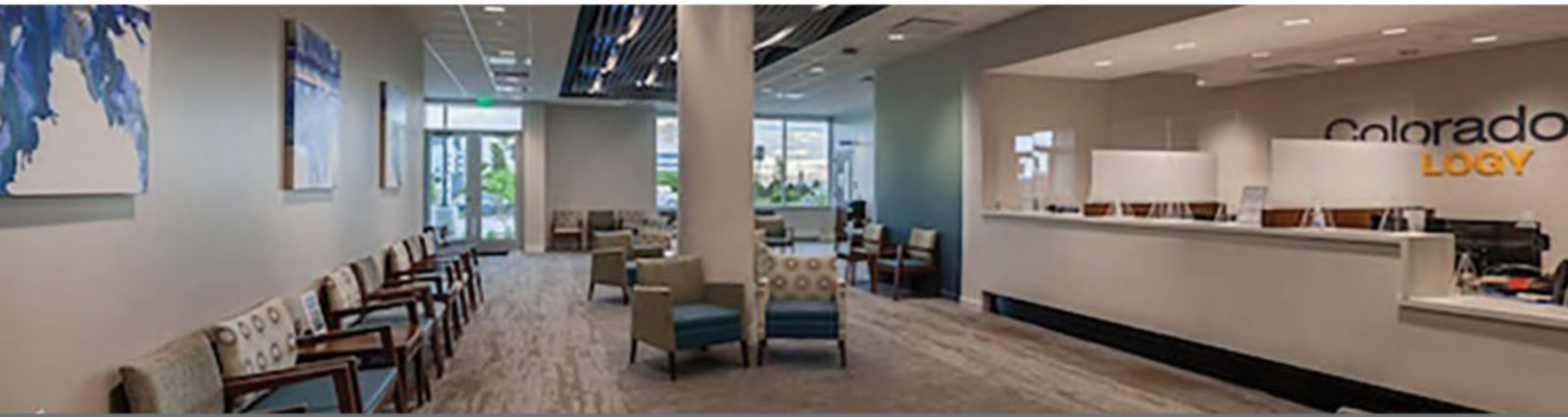

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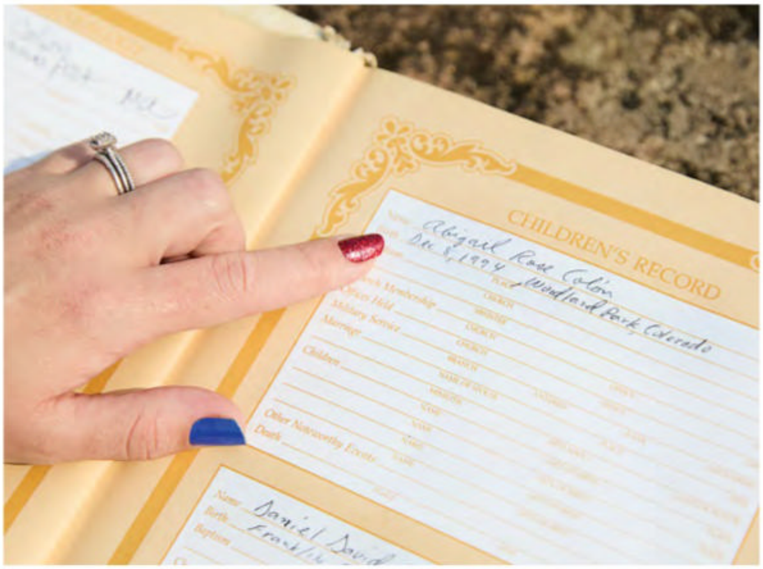

Abigail Colón's family Bible is the earliest known record of her birth.

Phil Weiser, Colorado's attorney general. Within hours of Donald Trump's inauguration this year, the president signed an executive order to end birthright citizenship for children of undocumented parents. Weiser joined a lawsuit challenging the order in federal court. "I will fight to ensure that all who are born in the United States keep their right to fully and fairly be a part of American society as a citizen with all its benefits and privileges," Weiser said in a press release this past January.

But the attorney general is also required to defend state agencies like the CDPHE when they are sued. This has put Weiser's office on the opposite side of Abigail's fight to reap the benefits of citizenship. (The Attorney General's Office said it cannot comment on active litigation. Weiser's campaign for governor similarly said Weiser cannot discuss Abigail's case or his views on birthright citizenship or birth certificates in general because it may impact the litigation against the CDPHE.)

Abigail's attorneys argued that the agency's 10-year rule is unconstitutional because it prevents her from exercising her constitutional rights as a citizen—the right to marry, travel, vote, and own property. The Attorney General's Office didn't dispute that Abigail was born in Colorado. Rather, it made a hair-splitting technical argument by contending she has no fundamental right to a birth certificate itself, only to the fundamental rights and privileges of citizenship the birth certificate gives access to. The state also claimed her inability to get a birth certificate has only "an attenuated effect" on her "ability to vote, travel, marry, parent, acquire property or own firearms."

That sentiment rings hollow to Abigail—a view echoed by Susan Pearson, a history professor at Northwestern University and author of *The Birth Certificate: An American History*. "Citizenship is fairly meaningless without the documentation to establish it," Pearson says. The flimsy piece of paper is the "key that unlocks the door" to the privileges of citizenship. Without it, Abigail can't fly on a plane, open a bank account, qualify for a credit card, rent an apartment, check in to most hotels, set up a cell phone plan, pass a background check, and pay taxes. "If I want to return something at GameStop now," Abigail says, "I need a photo ID."

Abigail and Eythan are fairly reserved about their feelings and will say only that Abigail's yearslong struggle is aggravating. At times, they simply shrug about their daily challenges. They laugh at the absurdities. But Abigail's frustration breaks through when she talks about having to rely on other people—when she feels like a burden on others. Eythan's job as an electrical utility technician requires him to travel a lot, so Abigail, a stay-at-home mom, has to rely on her in-laws, who live nearby, for help. She can't drive her daughter to the playground or pediatrician's office. When Eythan got sick, her mother-in-law had to buy the age-restricted medicine.

Until Abigail started collecting evidence to get a birth certificate, she felt invisible. If something happened to her, would anyone outside her family know? Would anyone care? The stack of papers she and her lawyers have accumulated proving her birth has at least given her a small sense of identity, if not legal status. "I still don't exist because I don't have proper paperwork," Abigail says.

ABIGAIL'S BROTHER DANIEL was born in Tennessee. A judge ordered that he be given a birth certificate after two court hearings. Another brother, Jesse, was born in Missouri. Their parents testified over Zoom, and the judge quickly granted him a certificate. Despite nearly a decade of trying, their older

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sister still hasn't gotten hers from Colorado: Abigail's case against the state sat in court for nearly a year before the judge ruled against her, writing that the agency's 10-year rule had only an "indirect" effect on Abigail's constitutional rights. Abigail filed an appeal, which is ongoing.

"Colorado, without question, has the most restrictive delayed birth certificate policy in the country," Sherman says. One difference between Colorado and states like Tennessee and Missouri is that those governments allow a judge to weigh the evidence and rule independently. Colorado leaves the decision entirely up to the CDPHE.

The agency says it has to follow its regulations as written, which exist mainly to prevent fraud. Abigail's attorney told me that the CDPHE has never suggested Abigail isn't who she says she is or that she wasn't born in Colorado. "As far as we can tell," Sherman says, "the sole reason for the denial was because that one record was created when Abigail was 11 instead of nine."

Abigail plans to keep appealing if she has to. She wants the law to change, not just for herself but for others who are living as ghosts. Colorado Legal Services says it has five other clients waiting on the outcome of Abigail's appeal because the 10-year rule is also stopping them from getting their documents. "If me fighting for a certain cause that I think is right benefits people in my shoes—then yeah. I'm going to do what it takes," Abigail says.

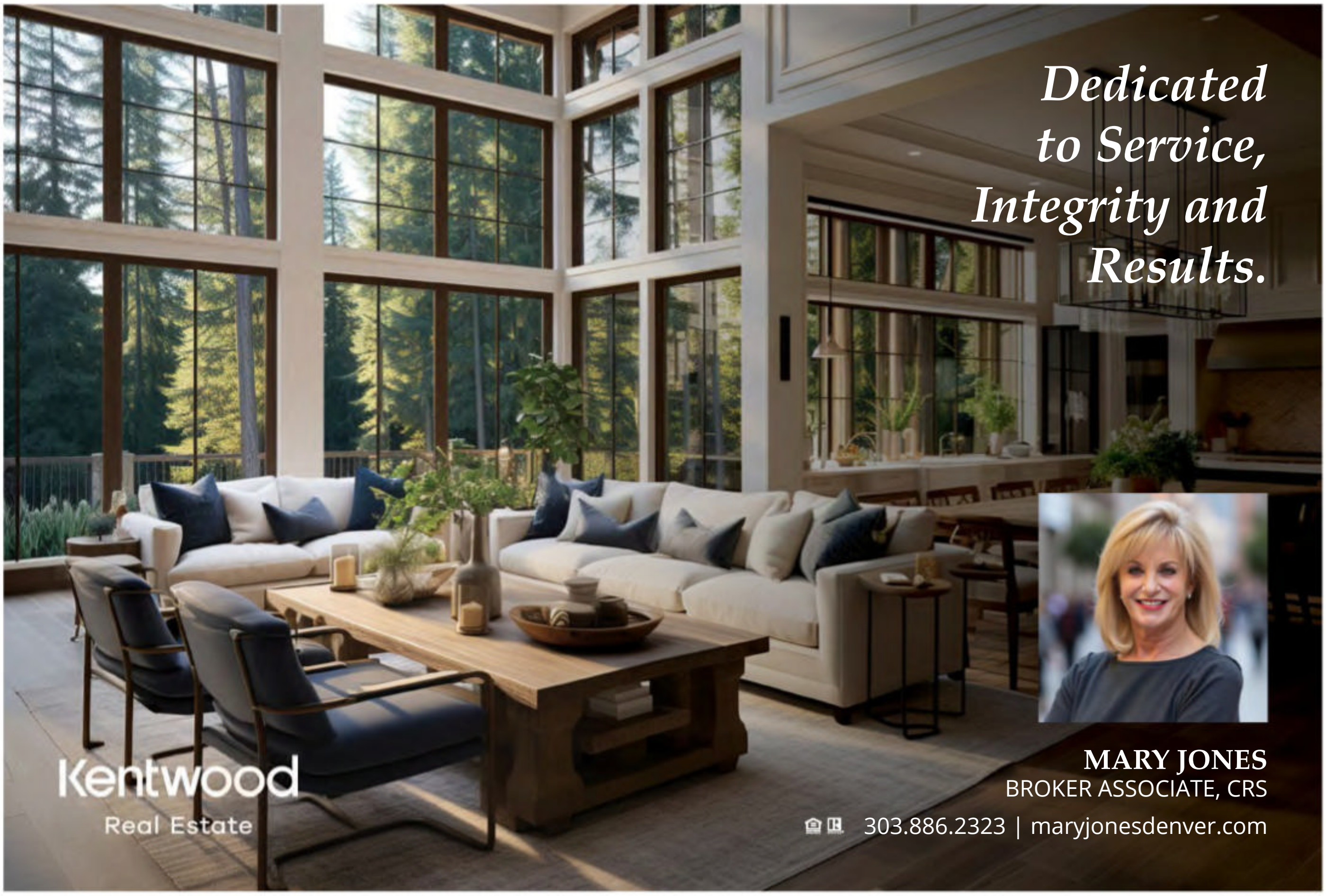
Sitterley, the attorney from United Stateless, says it's a human rights violation to deny someone their inherent rights of citizenship or a legal identity. She points to international treaties and the 1958 U.S. Supreme Court case of Albert Trop, a World War II soldier found guilty of desertion. As punishment, he was stripped of his U.S. citizenship and rendered stateless. The court found this punishment to be unconstitutional. Chief Justice Earl Warren wrote that stripping away a person's citizenship is "the total destruction of the individual's status in organized society" and rendering someone stateless "is a form of punishment more primitive than torture."

Abigail just wants to live a normal life. She wants to go on a plane and look at the clouds. She wants to get a college degree or certificate. She wants to get a fishing license and go line dancing without having to tell her life story to the guy at the door asking for IDs. She *needs* health insurance.

Abigail gave birth to her first child at home, assisted by a midwife. When complications arose—a nearly fourth-degree tear—she was moved to a nearby hospital for emergency surgery. Six weeks later, she and Eythan returned to the same hospital to schedule a follow-up appointment. At the front desk, the receptionist asked for her ID and insurance card. Abigail said she didn't have either. The receptionist paused, then told her she must be at the wrong hospital. Abigail pulled out the discharge papers from her emergency visit to show that she wasn't. Eventually, the receptionist offered her an appointment for a nonemergency visit—in eight months. If she had had health insurance, there were appointments available that day.

Abigail and Eythan are now expecting their second child. If Abigail's appeal against Colorado is successful, she may receive a birth certificate of her own not long after her newborn does. Until then, she'll navigate the challenges of parenthood without a legal identity, a woman and mother who exists in every way but one: on paper.

Spencer Bailey is a writer and attorney in Denver. Send feedback to letters@5280.com.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THE DOCTOR WILL FINALLY SEE YOU NOW

For far too long, health care has focused primarily on men. Thankfully, that's changing, with Colorado providers tailoring treatments to women's needs.

BY ROSE CAHALAN

ILLUSTRATIONS BY MELINDA BECK

TO UNDERSTAND HOW DEEPLY SEXISM IS ROOTED IN HEALTH CARE, LOOK NO FURTHER THAN THE WORD "HYSTERIA."

For millennia, this misogynistic diagnosis—which comes from the Greek term for uterus, "hystera"—referred to any woman who couldn't control her emotions. The ancient Greek physician Hippocrates prescribed sex as the treatment; 23 centuries later, Freud endorsed the same idea. Women with epilepsy were often misdiagnosed as hysterical and sent to insane asylums. The label wasn't removed from the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* until 1980.

We've come a long way since then, but disparities persist. In the emergency room, women are less likely to be given pain medication than men, and when they do get relief, they wait an average of 30 minutes longer for it. And though women tend to live longer than men, they also spend an average of nine years in poor health, which is 25 percent more time than men. Fifteen percent of all Colorado women who responded to a 2023 KFF survey described their health as fair or poor. Women also reported an average of 10 poor mental health days during the preceding month.

Look for signs of progress, though, and you'll find plenty: For example, the mortality rate for women with breast cancer nationwide has fallen by 43 percent since 1989, thanks to earlier diagnosis and better treatments. In Colorado, researchers and providers are expanding care for female athletes, destigmatizing menopause, fighting racism in prenatal and obstetric care, and more. Here's how they're charting better outcomes.

1993
The year Congress passed a law mandating women be included in medical research.

$1.24 BILLION
Funding U.S. startups focusing on erectile dysfunction received from 2019 to 2023, according to McKinsey. Startups that treat endometriosis took in only $44 million.

2%
Share of all venture capital funding in the United States that went to women's health care startups in 2023.

LEVELING THE PLAYING FIELD

Children's Hospital Colorado's new Female Athlete Program is changing the way we treat teen girls in sports.

During her freshman year at Thornton's Pinnacle Charter School, Nevaeh Zamora felt a pain in her hip. The injury sidelined the competitive track and cross-country runner and landed her in the office of Dr. Aubrey Armento, a sports medicine physician at Children's Hospital Colorado. Armento diagnosed a torn hip flexor—and saw symptoms of an even more dangerous condition.

Zamora was wary of doctors and at first gave only one-word, yes-or-no answers to Armento's questions. But the orthopedics specialist knew how to handle this delicate conversation, in part because of her personal experience. Armento had also been a runner in high school and had struggled with bone stress injuries as a result of overtraining and undereating. "I lost my period in high school, and I had a difficult relationship with food," she says. "It was taboo to talk about periods or weight." She recounted her story to her young patient, who began to open up.

During a routine physical in eighth grade, a doctor had told Zamora, "Looks like you've put on some pantry weight." The careless words echoed in her mind for years, prompting waves of shame. "Food became the enemy from that point on," says Zamora, now 18. "I just stopped eating." Losing weight would also improve her race times, she believed. Her Instagram and TikTok feeds were filled with images of slender

young women: health and fitness influencers sharing endless diet and exercise tips. "Eat this, don't eat that, do this, don't do that—social media was definitely fueling the negative thoughts," she says. Zamora put in more and more hours on the track and watched her clothes get looser as the pounds slipped away, until her hip injury forced her to slow down.

Instead of treating the torn hip flexor in isolation, Armento referred Zamora to Amanda McCarthy, a registered dietitian at Children's who specializes in sports nutrition. Slowly, with both experts' help, Zamora stopped counting calories. "I learned to see food as fuel, not a reward," she says, adding of Armento and McCarthy: "They were my saviors."

This experience was by design. Zamora later became one of the first patients at the new Female Athlete Program, a clinic that opened at Children's last year. The only such program in Colorado and one of just a few nationwide, the clinic includes specialists in sports medicine, orthopedics, nutrition, and gynecology, all focused on providing wraparound care for a population that has historically been overlooked. "There's always been an assumption in medicine that you can treat women the same way you treat men, and it's shortsighted," says Dr. Lauryn Roth, one of the program's founding physicians and a specialist in pediatric and adolescent gynecology. "Female hormones absolutely change things, and female athletes are dealing with a whole different set of issues." That includes the female athlete triad: missed or irregular periods, disordered eating, and low bone-mineral density, issues that often plague young women who overtrain and underfuel.

Before Roth can make a specialized plan for each patient, she often has to correct false beliefs they may have learned from coaches, peers, or the internet. "It's a common misconception in the athletic world that, 'Oh, your period might stop,'" Roth says. "But it's not normal. It's a sign that we need to make changes." Over the long term, missed periods are a sign that the body is in a low-estrogen state, which increases the chance of such complications as broken bones, osteoporosis, and heart problems. Endurance athletes, such as runners and swimmers, as well as participants in sports that emphasize appearance, like figure skating and gymnastics, are at particular risk. (Men and boys can suffer from eating disorders too, though they may not feel as much pressure to lose weight if they play sports that emphasize bulking up.)

Like Armento, Roth sometimes shares her own experiences with patients. She was a figure skater and swimmer who missed practices because of painful periods, even while peers told her that disruptive cramping was normal. Now she helps female athletes with similar symptoms explore options that can make periods easier or safely eliminate them altogether.

The clinic's opening comes at a time when more elite athletes are speaking publicly about their struggles with eating disorders. In her 2023 memoir, Olympic runner Kara Goucher of Boulder revealed that one of her coaches had pushed her to lose weight, leaving her with lingering body image issues. Allie Ostrander, also a professional runner in Boulder, frequently posts about her recovery from anorexia on Instagram and YouTube. For her part, Zamora has been teaching food positivity to health classes at her high school, a task she took on as her senior capstone project. She also leads by example with her teammates. "I'm the one handing out granola bars and orange slices before a race," she says. "And sometimes I'm the one saying, 'Let's go to Dairy Queen after practice.' I don't want to sacrifice the joy that comes with eating."

PINNACLE TIMBERWOLVES
TRACK & FIELD

This spread, from left: Drs. Lauryn Roth and Aubrey Armento; patient Nevaeh Zamora

"FEMALE HORMONES ABSOLUTELY CHANGE THINGS, AND FEMALE ATHLETES ARE DEALING WITH A WHOLE DIFFERENT SET OF ISSUES."

PORTRAITS BY SARAH BANKS

"I WANTED THEM TO HAVE A BETTER EXPERIENCE THAN I HAD"

After surviving her own traumatic delivery, Birdie Johnson launched an Aurora nonprofit to ensure no mother is forced to give birth without support.

When Birdie Johnson was training to become a doula, she found herself sitting in a Denver-area hospital as a nurse interviewed patients checking into the labor and delivery ward. "There was an Asian woman, a white woman, and a Black woman," Johnson recalls. "And the nurse asked the Black woman, 'Have you done any drugs or alcohol today?' The other two patients didn't get that question." Johnson confronted the nurse, but the woman insisted she had treated all the patients equally. "She truly hadn't realized," Johnson says.

Moments like these led Johnson in 2021 to found Mama Bird, an Aurora-based nonprofit that provides doula services, support groups, and other resources for moms of color. The group, which has three full-time employees and a larger network of contractors and partners, provides low-cost or no-cost care to clients in need. At Mama Bird, you can find a doula to work with you from prenatal through postpartum care; sign up for a back-to-work breastfeeding class; be referred to a nonwhite lactation consultant or pediatrician; or take a free yoga class. "I try to give women the resources I wish I'd had," Johnson says.

5280: Why did you start Mama Bird?

Birdie Johnson: When I first became a doula, I was working with predominantly white clients, and I learned there were big differences in our birthing experiences. For example, one mom complained that her doctor was asking too many questions. That had not been my experience at all. Or the fears that birthing people express: White clients were usually worried about the pain or something being wrong with their child. Black women were worried they or their babies might die.

Then I started working with BIPOC women, who asked for resources led by people who looked like them. I didn't yet know a lactation specialist of color or a midwife of color, but I was like, *Maybe I can help find these resources.* Also, many of these women couldn't afford a doula, and I wanted them to have a better experience than I'd had.

How did the system fail you?

I almost lost my life, and I did lose my first child's life. My health care providers gave very little patient support. No one told me what a bloody show [vaginal discharge that can be a sign labor is approaching] was, so when it happened, I was terrified. I went into labor around 22 weeks, and when I arrived at the emergency room bleeding out, they just told me to have a seat. Eventually, another patron in the waiting room insisted they take me back, and I immediately delivered my baby and passed out. Later they told me that they took the baby and buried it. And the provider, his first words to me weren't, "I'm sorry." They were, "What's your plan for birth control?" It was traumatizing.

How can a doula help women have better experiences?

We can help you speak up and ask questions or push back. We often see women feeling pressured to make choices out of fear, like when a provider is saying you need an induction or you need a C-section. Well, let's slow down and really have a conversation first. Sometimes there's a code word between a doula and a client, for example, so that if a client really doesn't like something, she says "pineapple." That's a way of calling for help and asking her doula to advocate for her.

A misconception about doulas is that they only help during birth, but they can also support people going through miscarriages, abortions, and postpartum, right? Absolutely. There are doulas who work with people during infertility and during bereavement. Postpartum is big for us—we do home visits once a week for at least six to eight weeks after birth. Maybe that looks like taking the baby so they can shower or doing light chores or just listening while they process their birth. We can refer them to a therapist or a mom's circle. It's really about providing a soft landing into parenthood.

FOUR ORGANIZATIONS IN DENVER PROVIDING SUPPORT FOR NEW (OR HOPEFUL) MOMS

NAYACARE
This Denver company will send medical providers to your home for newborn visits so you don't have to travel to a doctor's office. The staff also includes a maternal mental health counselor and pelvic health physical therapist.

NURSE-FAMILY PARTNERSHIP
This nationwide nonprofit pairs low-income parents with a nurse who provides in-home support. Since 2000, it's served more than 3,500 Colorado families.

MILE HIGH HOPE SUPPORT GROUP
Resolve, the national infertility nonprofit, hosts support groups where aspiring parents can discuss the challenges of fertility treatment and pregnancy loss. The Mile High Hope chapter in Aurora holds both in-person and virtual meetings monthly.

THE MOM WALK COLLECTIVE
Making fellow mom friends and fighting social isolation can be daunting. This group offers a simple solution: free monthly meetups to walk a trail, strollers and all, while chatting with other moms. Meetups are available in Denver, Westminster, Arvada, Greenwood Village, Centennial, Littleton, Parker, Thornton, and Boulder.

MISSING THE BEAT

Heart attacks are fatal twice as often in women as in men. A new generation of tests may change that.

Close your eyes and picture someone having a heart attack. What kind of person did you visualize? Most likely, your mental image was of a man. The truth is that heart disease doesn't discriminate: It's the number-one killer of women globally, accounting for as many as one in three female deaths. Heart attacks are also twice as likely to be fatal in women, in part because women more often experience a multitude of symptoms—fatigue, nausea, back pain—in addition to the classic chest pain. "A heart attack might get lost in the noise," says Dr. Stacy Trent, an emergency department physician and associate professor at the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus.

In theory, a simple blood draw should cut through the din. But the test ERs have long used to appraise a patient's level of troponin—a protein released into the bloodstream during a heart attack—wasn't sensitive enough to catch many female heart attacks. "New research was able to show that the abnormal level of troponin for women is much lower," Trent says. Tests developed over the past decade are 10 to 100 times more sensitive, but doctors are still figuring out how to interpret the results. That's why Trent is leading a study to see if patients in Denver who use the advanced evaluations have better outcomes. It's too soon to say, but she's hopeful: A 2019 study found that with the new tests, women were roughly three percent more likely to be diagnosed with a heart attack. That increase may sound small, but to the people whose lives were saved, it's enormous.

YOU CAN HANDLE THE TRUTH

Although menopause is a momentous biological process that almost half of the population will someday experience, the medical community doesn't seem too curious about it. Only one percent of all academic research on aging involves "the change," a 2024 review by a Harvard Medical School professor found. Dr. Nanette Santoro, a menopause researcher and chair of the OB-GYN department at the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus, is hopeful that number will rise. "We are seeing more enthusiasm for research, and more women are not wanting to tolerate menopause breaking their stride," she says. Still, misconceptions persist, which is why we asked Santoro to debunk three of them below.

MYTH: **Hormone therapy is risky.**
TRUTH: **It's actually very safe.**

Supplemental hormones (estrogen and sometimes progesterone) can relieve menopause symptoms, such as hot flashes and insomnia, but in 2002, a widely publicized study found that they also increased the risk of breast cancer, strokes, and blood clots. Misleading media coverage amplified fears, and alarmed by scary statistics, such as a 26 percent rise in breast cancer, millions of women stopped taking hormones (or never started in the first place). But the danger is still very low. That increase in cancer, for example, meant the individual threat went from 2.33 percent to 2.94 percent. Still, only about six percent of menopausal women take hormones—a figure that should probably be higher, since 80 percent experience symptoms. Bottom line: "A majority of women can take hormones with very low risk and will get great relief," Santoro says.

MYTH: **Hormone therapy is a cure-all.**
TRUTH: **For many, it is—but not for everyone.**

"When I prescribe hormones, and then my patient comes back a month or two later, I never know what I'm going to hear," Santoro says. "She might say, 'All my symptoms are gone.' But others will say, 'It didn't work at all.' " Thankfully, those who don't benefit from hormones have options. Several drugs originally prescribed for other purposes—such as some antidepressants and gabapentin, an antiseizure pharmaceutical—can also help. "And there are other medications in development now," Santoro says. "There's almost always a way to feel better."

MYTH: **Menopause is brief.**
TRUTH: **Symptoms can last for years, though experiences vary widely.**

The average hot flash sufferer will deal with that symptom for seven years; Black women experience them for an average of 10 years. "That's a long time to be struggling," Santoro says, which makes seeking help all the more important, even if your symptoms aren't severe. Meanwhile, a lucky minority of women will never have menopause symptoms or will have them only briefly.

Justin LeVett/Courtesy of CU Anschutz

THE SILENT TREATMENT

I thought I knew what endometriosis was. I was wrong.

I blinked groggily, staring at a black-and-white clock on the wall of a hospital room. I'd just woken up from surgery, and my OB-GYN was standing at the foot of the bed, telling me that the procedure had gone smoothly. Concentrating on her words was hard, though, because the clock appeared to be slowly sliding down the wall—a visual distortion from the fentanyl a nurse had given me for the pain in my lower abdomen. I closed my eyes for a moment, and when I opened them again, the doctor was holding up photos that showed dozens of ugly red growths that had been all over my ovaries, intestines, and fallopian tubes. The tubes were especially useless: blocked, swollen, and filled with fluid ("like a toxic swamp," as another doctor had said cheerfully when I failed a diagnostic test a few weeks earlier). "It's a pretty bad case of endometriosis," the surgeon said, "but hopefully IVF will work."

Even after the drugs had worn off, the diagnosis was hard to grasp. I'd read about endometriosis online. In essays and social media posts by regular women as well as celebrities such as Chrissy Teigen, the story was always the same: A woman experiences crippling pain with her period, and a doctor dismisses her suffering as normal cramps, suggesting she take Tylenol. She eventually insists on surgery—the only way to get a definitive diagnosis—and feels validated when the surgeon finds abnormal growths of uterine tissue outside the uterus. At least one in 10 women suffer from this underdiagnosed disease, which can cause infertility as well as chronic pain.

But could this really be my story? I'd never had painful periods or any other symptoms, and yet my case was stage 4. My IVF doctor explained that this was silent or asymptomatic endo, as it's often called, and that she saw it all the time. Mysteriously, the severity of the symptoms and the disease don't always correlate; you can be stage 1 and have crippling pain or stage 4 with none. And while many women with endo will struggle with infertility, others don't. I asked my doctor if women with endo had lower than average IVF success rates. No, she said, assuring me I had a 70 percent chance of pregnancy with the first attempt alone. Three years, seven embryo transfers, and nearly six figures in medical bills later, I'd learn she was wrong, at least when it came to severe cases like mine. Although it's common—accounting for 25 to 50

percent of all female infertility—endometriosis is such a poorly understood condition that even fertility experts can be misinformed about it.

Part of the problem is a lack of money for research. "Women's health has always been severely underfunded, and there's no government funding whatsoever for infertility," says Dr. Eric Surrey, a senior reproductive endocrinologist (IVF doctor) at CCRM Colorado in Lone Tree. Pharmaceutical companies aren't interested, either: "All our studies [at CCRM] have been self-funded," he says, as is almost all endometriosis research nationally. The fact that the disease can only be definitively diagnosed with surgery also presents a major obstacle. Surrey believes the widely cited estimate that 10 percent of women have endo is likely a significant undercount, since many don't undergo surgery. Earlier diagnosis wouldn't just reduce suffering, he argues—it would also save money. The average cost billed to insurance for an endo patient who waits three or more years for a diagnosis is a staggering $34,460, according to a study Surrey led in 2020. "Earlier diagnosis is critical," he says. Someday, he hopes, it might be caught early with a simple blood test.

In the meantime, other developments are ongoing, including new medications with fewer side effects. One of the cruelest things about endometriosis, for me, was that the same hormone that made me feel good, estrogen, fueled the lesions' growth; to suppress the disease and increase the chances IVF could work, I had to take a $1,900 monthly shot (which my insurance refused to cover) called Lupron Depot, which tanks estrogen levels and temporarily induces menopause, with all its hellish side effects. I'd wake at 2 a.m. after a hot flash, pajamas drenched in cold sweat, wondering why there wasn't a better way. "We are making progress," Surrey assured me. He's hopeful in part because of how dramatically women's health care has advanced in his lifetime. "If you go back to the 1970s, they were doing open abdominal surgery [rather than minimally invasive] for endometriosis, and the main surgery was hysterectomy," he says. "We've gone way beyond that now, and I'm optimistic that will continue."

Three years into IVF, I wasn't nearly as sanguine. As we transferred embryo after embryo—an onerous process involving hundreds of hormone shots, invasive procedures, pills, and blood draws—the result was always a negative pregnancy test. We tried new doctors, new clinics, new meds, and eventually, a new uterus: that of a kindhearted relative who volunteered to be our surrogate. She had a miscarriage. Even in support groups, previously a source of comfort, I felt alone. Most of the women I'd met there early on had long since had their babies. After my fourth or fifth negative, I could no longer bring myself to look at the black-and-white embryo photo that I was given before each transfer. It was too painful to imagine the person that clump of cells could become, knowing that nine days later this chance would likely be gone like all the others.

For the seventh attempt—the last one, my husband and I decided, before going all in on surrogacy—a friend offered her frozen eggs. It was a long shot; there was nothing wrong with my eggs, the doctors agreed. Nevertheless, we gave it a try, and one of those eggs turned into my now-three-year-old son. At my lowest, I'd wondered if all the pain would ever feel worth it; from the first time I held him, tiny and pink and squalling, I knew it was.

Why my case was so difficult is a mystery. At some point, the doctors started shrugging and admitting they didn't know. Despite all the advanced technology that comes with IVF, luck remains a significant part of the equation. I carry some scars, physical and emotional, from those hard years, but the silver lining is that I usually don't worry about minor everyday challenges, because my gratitude for the chance to be a parent is so profound. My toddler doesn't eat vegetables, and some days he watches more cartoons than he should, but he is here, smiling and laughing and running around with a shock of blond hair and piercing green eyes. How incredible is that? ▲▲

Some of the pill bottles and syringes that helped create the author's son, pictured in an ultrasound photo.

Courtesy of Rose Cahalan

AT LEAST ONE IN 10 WOMEN SUFFER FROM THIS UNDERDIAGNOSED DISEASE, WHICH CAN CAUSE INFERTILITY AS WELL AS CHRONIC PAIN.

Our annual list of the very best physicians—in more than 75 medical specialties—in the Denver metro area, created in partnership with Castle Connolly, a health care research and information company.

DENVER'S TOP DOCTORS 2025

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We shorten the names of hospitals our docs are affiliated with in our listings. Below are our abbreviations and the official names as well as their hospital systems, where applicable.

AURORA – HCA HealthONE Aurora
AVISTA – AdventHealth Avista
BROOMFIELD – UCHealth Broomfield Hospital
CASTLE ROCK – AdventHealth Castle Rock
CENTENNIAL – HCA HealthONE Centennial
CHILDREN'S – Children's Hospital Colorado
CHILDREN'S NORTH CAMPUS – Children's Hospital Colorado North Campus, Broomfield
CHILDREN'S SOUTH CAMPUS – Children's Hospital Colorado South Campus, Highlands Ranch
CRAIG – Craig Hospital
DENVER HEALTH – Denver Health Medical Center
FOOTHILLS – Foothills Hospital—Boulder Community Health
GOOD SAMARITAN – Intermountain Health – Good Samaritan Hospital
HIGHLANDS RANCH – UCHealth Highlands Ranch Hospital
LITTLETON – AdventHealth Littleton
LONGMONT – Longmont United Hospital—CommonSpirit
LUTHERAN – Intermountain Health – Lutheran Hospital
NATIONAL JEWISH – National Jewish Health
MOUNTAIN RIDGE – HCA HealthONE Mountain Ridge
ORTHOCOLORADO – OrthoColorado Hospital—CommonSpirit
PARKER – Parker—AdventHealth
PLATTE VALLEY – Intermountain Health – Platte Valley Medical Center
PORTER – Porter—AdventHealth
PRESBYTERIAN ST. LUKE'S – HCA HealthONE Presbyterian St. Luke's
RMC – HCA HealthONE Rocky Mountain Children's
ROSE – HCA HealthONE Rose
SKY RIDGE – HCA HealthONE Sky Ridge
ST. ANTHONY – St. Anthony Hospital—CommonSpirit
ST. ANTHONY NORTH – St. Anthony North Hospital—CommonSpirit
ST. ANTHONY SUMMIT – St. Anthony Summit Hospital—CommonSpirit
SAINT JOSEPH – Intermountain Health – Saint Joseph Hospital
SWEDISH – HCA HealthONE Swedish
UNIVERSITY – UCHealth University of Colorado Hospital
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¡VIVA LA FIESTA!

Relaxing isn't easy when you run four restaurants—including one with a Michelin star—but every summer, Johnny and Kasie Curiel take time off to turn their backyard into a Jalisco-style celebration of Mexican cuisine. STORY BY MARK ANTONATION

RECIPES BY JOHNNY CURIEL PHOTOGRAPHY BY AARON COLUSSI
PROP STYLING BY CHARLI ORNETT FOOD STYLING BY VERONICA SPERA

EVERY SUMMER FOR THE PAST THREE YEARS, RESTAURATEURS JOHNNY AND KASIE CURIEL HAVE HOSTED A DINNER PARTY WITH ONE UNUSUAL GUEST:

A WHOLE HOG.

A day or two before the Curiels' friends and family sip mezcal, margaritas, and ice-cold Modelos on their LoHi patio, Johnny can be found at his kitchen counter breaking down a 90- to 120-pound pig (or two to three smaller ones): shoulders and shanks, ribs and belly, even the head and feet. The cuts are bound for a variety of traditional Mexican dishes he has perfected after working in his parents' restaurant in Guadalajara, traveling all over Mexico for food research, and serving beautiful plates at the couple's restaurants: Michelin-starred Alma Fonda Fina in LoHi, Mezcaleria Alma next door, Cozobi Fonda Fina in Boulder, and Alteño in Cherry Creek.

THE MENU

- Cochinita Pibil
- Frijoles con Puerco
- Rajas con Crema
- Tomatillo Salsa con Chiles de Árbol
- Ensalada de Nopales
- Curtido Yucateco
- Nonalcoholic Colada
- Classic Margarita

This spread, from left: **Johnny Curiel with a 20-pound pig that will soon become carnitas; cinnamon, allspice, nopales, salt, and five kinds of dried chiles**

Previous spread, clockwise from bottom left: **Cochinita pibil, rajas con crema, escabeche, frijoles con puerco, and ensalada de nopales, plus salsas and tortillas custom-made for the Curiels' menus**

Ahead of the party, a skin-on pork leg slow-roasts in an aromatic rub for Yucatecan cochinita pibil; the feet pickle in tangy brine before being slivered onto crispy tostadas. The ribs, tail, and belly become carnitas after several hours of bubbling away in manteca madre (seasoned rendered lard) in a cauldron-size cazo, the traditional pot used in Jalisco to coax out the most intense flavors. The collar goes into inky frijoles negros con puerco seasoned with chiles, cumin, and avocado leaves. Bright salsas; creamy rajas (strips of poblano chiles cooked in a rich sauce with mushrooms, onions, and roasted corn); curtido (a Yucatecan slaw vibrant with habaneros); and ensalada de nopales (prickly pear cactus) round out a feast bursting with freshness and spice.

Meanwhile, even after long days and nights spent overseeing the front of the house and ensuring hospitality at the couple's eateries, Kasie is still thinking about the best ways to welcome guests into her own home. That includes shaking up cocktails and mocktails as well as displaying the mementos—earthenware bowls and other decorative items—she and Johnny have saved from each of their establishments' openings as a reminder of the joys (and hard work) of being a restaurant family.

The Curiels' summer fiesta brings friends and industry colleagues together to celebrate Mexican cooking and culture and to emphasize the importance of carrying on family customs with their four-year-old son, John Jr. "It's incredibly important to pass down the generational traditions that were shared with me," Johnny says. "I want him to understand that the best moments in life happen over a good meal—and to take pride in his Mexican heritage and its cooking traditions."

That's why the Curiels begin the process with a whole animal, even if it means extra time and work; that's the way it's done in the kitchens, carnitas shops, and backyards of Jalisco, and that dedication yields the deepest, most nostalgic flavors.

You don't need to source a whole hog to host a pork-themed party, though. Here, the Curiels share recipes based on fresh ingredients and familiar cuts to help you capture the essence of Mexico for 12 to 15 guests. The many hands of friends and family make quick work of prep and cleanup, giving everyone more time to enjoy drinks and conversation while the flavors slowly come together.

A GRAIN OF SALT

The chef uses Diamond Crystal salt at his restaurants and at home because the flavor is mellow and it contains less sodium by volume than table salt or Morton's kosher salt. If you use a different brand for any of the following recipes, start with about half as much as is called for and taste as you add more. Find Diamond Crystal salt at Whole Foods Market or online.

COCHINITA PIBIL

In Mexico's Yucatán region, cochinita pibil is pork traditionally roasted in an underground oven called a pib. Fortunately, Curiel's adaptation doesn't require building a stone-lined pit in your backyard. Achiote paste, made primarily from orange-red annatto seeds, is the key ingredient to making the marinade colorful and aromatic. (Just be careful: Achiote stains.) You can find the paste in eight-ounce bricks—the perfect size for this recipe—at most Mexican grocery stores or online. For the pork, a bone-in leg or shoulder is preferable to create more flavor, and the skin will add unctuous collagen. But boneless, skinless shoulder still yields excellent results; just don't use a lean cut like loin or sirloin. Leftovers are great crisped in a pan and served in tacos, sopes, quesadillas, burritos, or tortas.

For the marinade:

5 habanero chiles, roasted so the skins become blistered
1 large white onion, roughly chopped and pan-roasted to blister the exterior
¼ cup garlic cloves, pan-roasted but not softened
¼ cup apple cider vinegar
½ cup achiote paste, broken into pieces
2 tsp. Mexican oregano
4 bay leaves
3 cloves
2 tbsp. Diamond Crystal kosher salt
½ cup fresh-squeezed orange juice (1–2 oranges)
½ cup fresh-squeezed lime juice (4–5 limes)
1 bunch cilantro, roughly chopped
2 cups chicken broth

For the cochinita pibil:

6 banana leaves, toasted
1 bone-in, skin-on pork leg (or about 10–15 lb. pork shoulder)

Preheat your oven to 225° F. Combine all marinade ingredients in a blender or food processor and purée until smooth.

Clean and lightly toast the banana leaves under a broiler or over direct flame (if you have a gas range or grill). They don't need to be scorched, but you should see the leaves soften and intensify in green color. Line a roasting pan with the leaves, place the pork on top of them, and pour the marinade over the meat, massaging it in as you go. You can also marinate the pork in the mixture overnight in your refrigerator.

Tightly cover the roasting pan with aluminum foil and place it on the middle rack of the oven for eight hours. Remove the pan from the oven and let the pork rest for about 20 minutes before unwrapping.

Use kitchen tongs or a serving fork to move the pork to a serving platter or bowl, breaking up the meat and mixing in some of the cooking liquid at the bottom of the roasting pan. Add finishing salt to taste and serve with tortillas.

***Clockwise from top left:* Kasie Curiel shakes up a margarita; cochinita pibil; a classic margarita; Johnny finishes the pibil with a lime squeeze.**

FRIJOLES CON PUERCO

This meaty black bean dish is as economical as it is delicious. Johnny uses brown chicken stock, which is made with roasted chicken bones. If you're buying premade stock, use a richer brand or substitute a quarter of the liquid with bone broth for extra flavor. The final consistency will be more like a thick soup than like American-style baked beans.

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1 lb. dry black beans
6 qt. homemade or store-bought brown chicken stock (low- or no sodium)
4 lb. boneless pork collar or shoulder, cut into two-inch cubes
1 poblano chile, seeded and diced small
2 jalapeños, seeded and diced small
6 habanero chiles, halved
1 white onion, diced small
½ cup Diamond Crystal kosher salt
1 tbsp. ground cumin
1 tsp. fresh-ground black pepper
1 tbsp. dark chili powder
2 large avocado leaves

Soak the black beans overnight in six quarts of water in a container large enough to allow space for the beans to expand as they hydrate.

You can toast whole cumin seeds (in a medium-hot pan until the aroma is released, one to two minutes) and then grind them or use recently purchased cumin powder.

In a large pot, combine the stock, pork, chiles, onion, avocado leaves, ¼ cup of salt, and the remaining spices and bring the liquid to a simmer. Let the pork simmer for one hour before rinsing the soaked beans and adding them to the pot (discarding the soaking water).

Simmer for three more hours or until the beans and pork are tender. Use the remaining ¼ cup of salt to season throughout the simmering time, tasting the cooking liquid as you go (you may not need to use all of it). When done, the pieces of pork should pull apart easily with a fork.

Remove the avocado leaves and use a slotted spoon to serve the frijoles and pork in bowls. Use a ladle to add more cooking liquid to each bowl as desired.

RAJAS CON CREMA

Rajas con crema are typically strips of poblano chile cooked in a creamy sauce; Curiel's version eats almost like creamed corn (amplified with mushrooms, chiles, onions, and garlic). Curiel loves oyster mushrooms for this dish because of their delicate texture, but you can use any variety. Whole Foods Market and other grocers generally carry a "chef's medley" with several types in one package. If you use larger varieties such as crimini or white button, scale back to 1.5 pounds since they tend to release more liquid while cooking.

3	oz. European-style butter
2	white onions, thinly sliced
4	cloves garlic, minced
4	poblano chiles, seeded and julienned
1	tbsp. Diamond Crystal kosher salt
6	cobs yellow corn, roasted
2	lb. oyster mushrooms (or a mix of what's available), broken into half-inch pieces
2	pinches freshly ground black pepper
1	cup heavy cream
1	cup full-fat sour cream (Curiel likes Daisy)
1	tsp. garlic powder

Melt the butter in a large pot over medium heat. Make sure the butter doesn't overheat or brown. Add the onions, garlic, poblanos, and salt and sweat the onions for 7 to 8 minutes (until they are translucent).

Add the corn, sliced off the cob, and mushrooms and let cook for about another 15 minutes. The poblanos should be tender but not mushy, and the mushrooms should not fall apart.

Mix the cream, sour cream, and garlic powder in a bowl, then pour it over the vegetables. Cook for about three more minutes, stirring frequently until the sauce thickens and coats the vegetables. Season to taste. Rajas con crema are great on corn tortillas.

TOMATILLO SALSA CON CHILES DE ÁRBOL

When sorting through piles of tomatillos at the grocery store, look for fruit that completely fill the papery husk; if the husk is loose or the tomatillo feels small inside it, skip it for plumper, riper specimens. This is a fairly mild salsa, but you can up the amount of chiles de árbol to your liking.

2.5	lb. tomatillos
4	chiles de árbol
10	garlic cloves
1	tbsp. Diamond Crystal kosher salt

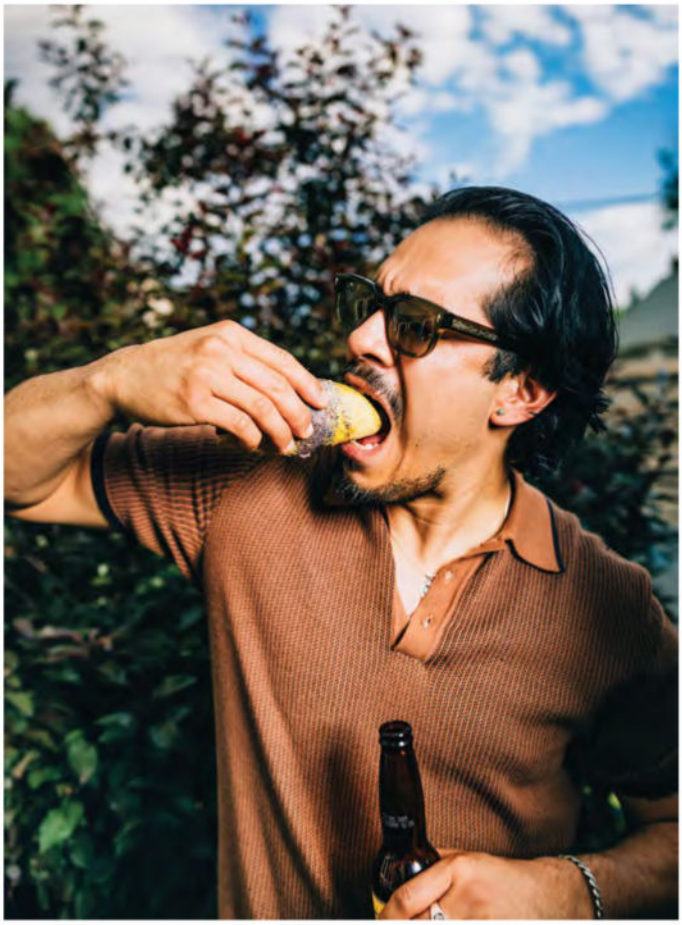
Boil the tomatillos for 2 to 3 minutes, then let them cool enough for handling so you can remove the husks. Remove the stem ends with a knife, as they can be tough and fibrous.

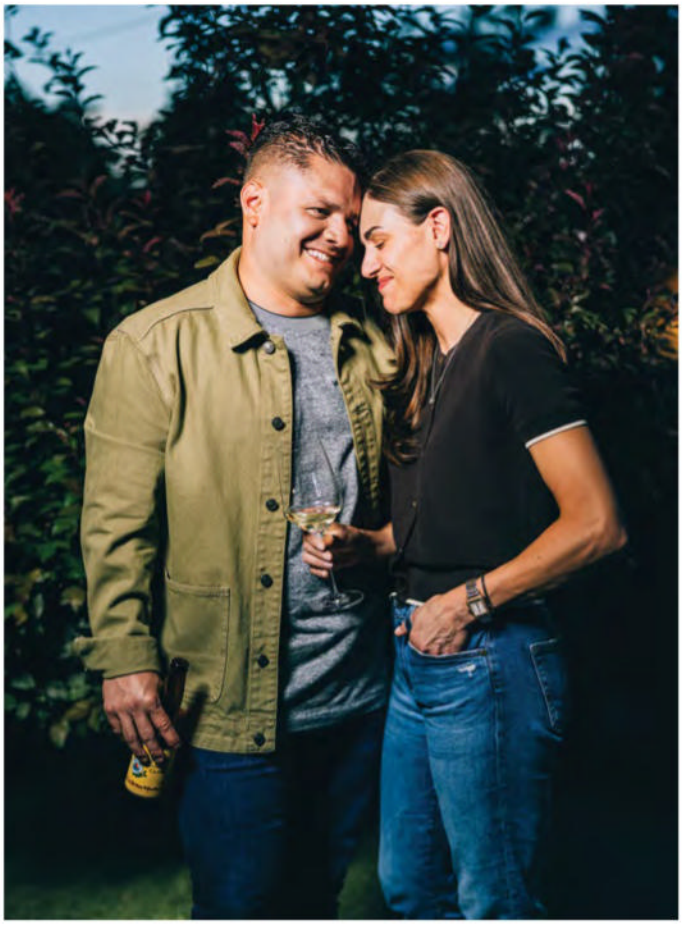
Stem and toast the chiles de árbol in a hot pan without blackening them. Put them into a blender or food processor and pulse until they are reduced to flakes. Add the garlic, tomatillos, and salt, and pulse for about 3 minutes at a low speed to allow the chile speckles to stand out.

ENSALADA DE NOPALES

The flesh of the prickly pear cactus has a subtle tartness and crisp texture, but it can become grayish and slimy if overcooked or left to sit too long. Curiel's recipe uses salt and baking soda in the blanching water, along with a quick ice bath, to keep the nopales bright and fresh. Many Latino grocery stores sell trimmed and de-thorned nopales in the produce section, saving time (and potential pain). Look for freshly trimmed cactus paddles with no discoloration or slime, and use them within a day to keep them from turning brown.

***From left:* Johnny tends the grill; tacos with carnitas, cochinita pibil, frijoles con puerco, and rajas con crema, plus a range of condiments.**





For blanching:

1	bunch fresh cilantro
¼	white onion, roughly chopped
5	garlic cloves, smashed
½	cup Diamond Crystal kosher salt
1	tsp. baking soda
10–12	trimmed and de-thorned cactus paddles, julienned

For the salad:

2	Roma tomatoes, julienned
1	white onion, julienned
1	bunch fresh cilantro, leaves only
1	pinch Mexican oregano
	Juice of 6 limes
	Salt and pepper to taste

Prepare an ice bath with ice and one gallon of water in a large bowl or pot.

Make a sachet using cheesecloth (or a similar food-prep fabric) and add the cilantro, chopped onion, and smashed garlic; set aside.

Boil water, salt, and baking soda in a large pot. Make sure the pot is big enough so that the nopales aren't crowded when you add them. Do not allow the water to simmer or boil for an extended period before adding the nopales, as the water will evaporate and the salt level will increase.

Add the sachet and the nopales and cook for 1.5 minutes at a strong boil. Immediately remove the nopales from the water using a strainer and place them in the ice bath, stirring until they are chilled completely. Remove from the ice bath and pat dry. They should be al dente and bright in color.

Place the nopales in a bowl and gently stir in the remaining salad ingredients. Serve in your favorite bowl as soon as possible or keep the salad well chilled until you're ready to eat (but not more than an hour).

***Clockwise from top left:* Guests enjoy tacos and cocktails; an agave-leaf mezcal shooter; Johnny and Kasie.**

CURTIDO YUCATECO

A crunchy, chile-forward slaw of cabbage and onions adds a bright note to balance the richness of the cochinita pibil. Use it to top your tacos or enjoy it on its own as a spicy and refreshing side.

2	white onions, thinly sliced
1	tbsp. Diamond Crystal kosher salt
2	pinches Mexican oregano
	Juice of 6 limes
1	head cabbage, thinly sliced
2	habanero chiles, thinly sliced

Toss all ingredients in a large bowl until well combined.

Let the mixture macerate for at least 5 minutes, then check and adjust seasoning before serving.

NONALCOHOLIC COLADA

The piña colada brings tropical vibes to any party, and this alcohol-free version adds the complex, herbal notes of epazote—sold in bunches of long, jagged leaves—in coconut syrup and as an oil garnish. If you have leftover epazote, you can chop it and add it to your frijoles con puerco toward the end of the simmer. Lyre's Nonalcoholic White Cane Spirit can be found at larger liquor stores, such as Davidson's or Total Beverage, or online.

For epazote oil:

1	cup grapeseed oil
15	grams fresh epazote (about 4 sprigs)

Combine oil and epazote in a blender until smooth. Pour into a saucepan and cook over medium heat until the oil mixture reaches 160° F. Pour the oil into a small bowl nestled in ice water. Once chilled, strain through cheesecloth or an oil filter cone. Store in a squeeze bottle in the refrigerator for up to two weeks. This also makes a colorful, herbal addition to salad dressings and grilled or roasted vegetables.

For the coconut epazote syrup:

1	cup coconut milk
1	cup granulated white sugar
20	grams fresh epazote (about 6 sprigs)

Combine all ingredients in a saucepan and bring to a boil. Reduce heat and let simmer for about 10 minutes. Cool and strain. Store in the refrigerator for up to one week.

For the cocktail:

2	oz. Lyre's Nonalcoholic White Cane Spirit
1	oz. coconut epazote syrup
.5	oz. fresh-squeezed lime juice
.75	oz. pineapple juice

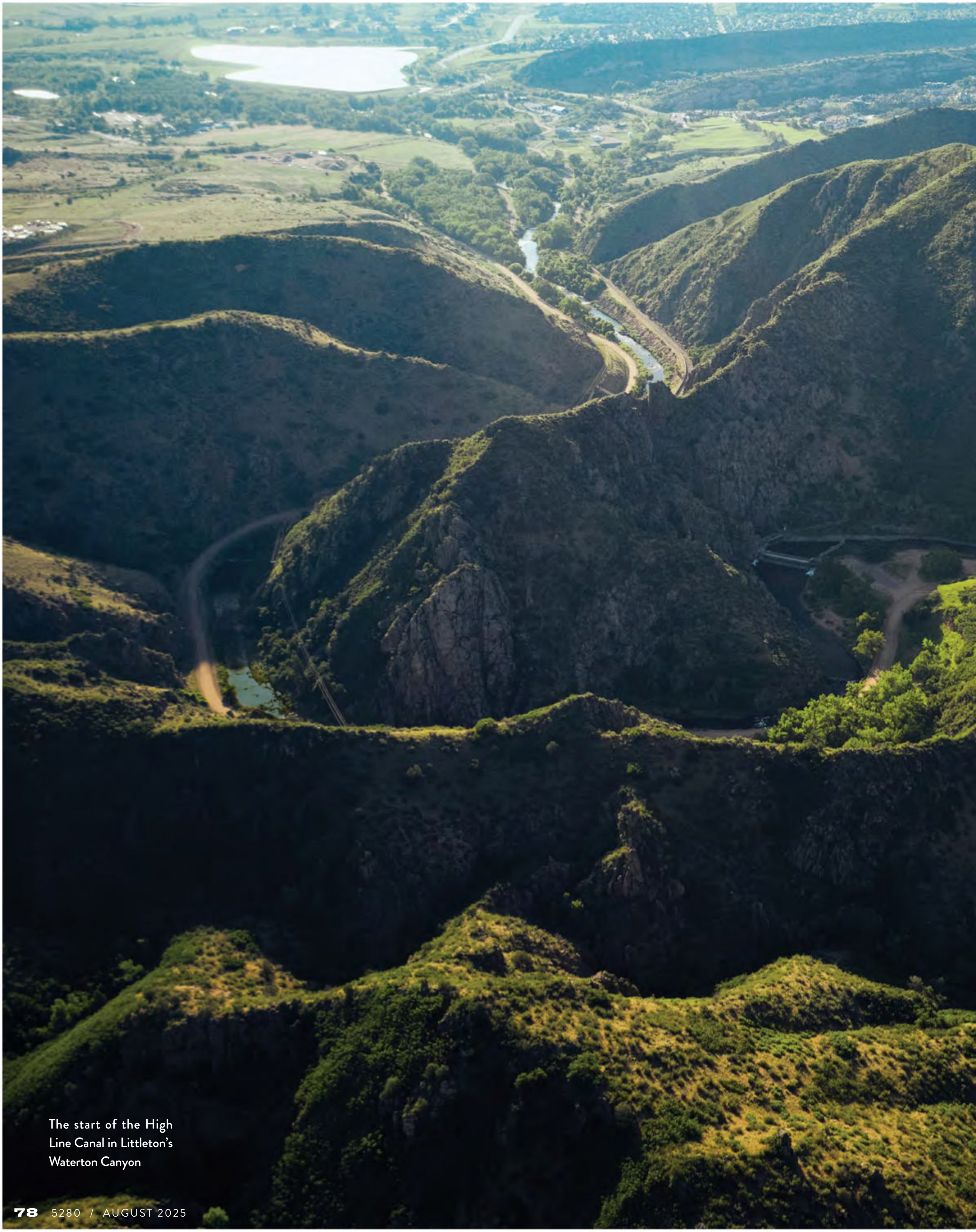
Put ice cubes and cocktail ingredients in a cocktail shaker and shake for approximately 10 seconds. Strain into a cocktail glass and top with drops of epazote oil as a garnish.

CLASSIC MARGARITA

Nothing tops a margarita on the rocks with salt to beat the heat, make cooking merrier, and complement your Mexican dinner spread.

2	oz. Herradura Blanco tequila
.75	oz. fresh-squeezed lime juice
.75	oz. Cointreau
.5	oz. agave nectar

Add all ingredients to a cocktail shaker and shake for approximately 10 seconds. Wet the rim of your glass with a lime wedge, dip the rim in salt, and pour the shaker contents into the glass. ▲



The start of the High Line Canal in Littleton's Waterton Canyon

Taking The High Trail

The High Line Canal is stepping into the future with $100 million in improvements. Now is the time to (re)discover this 71-mile urban gem.

BY DALIAH SINGER
PHOTOGRAPHY BY SETH K. HUGHES

To reach the official start of the High Line Canal,

I have to follow a wide dirt road two miles into Littleton's Waterton Canyon. Yellow warblers whistle among the cottonwood trees, and bikers and walkers of all ages meander the same path, escaping into the wilderness at lunchtime on a Wednesday. Forty minutes later, I arrive at an S-curve in the South Platte River, where, in the late 1880s, a dam and 600-foot-long tunnel were built to divert water toward the nascent settlements of Gold Rush pioneers. This spot marks Mile 0 of the High Line Canal trail, a greenway that covers more area than New York City's Central Park.

The 71-mile-long canal crosses through 11 jurisdictions and over and under three highways as it weaves northeast from Waterton Canyon to Aurora, almost reaching Denver International Airport. Along the way, it tells the story of the transformation of "the great American desert into a major metropolis," says Tom Noel, aka Dr. Colorado, a professor emeritus in history at University of Colorado Denver.

More than a century ago, the canal was built to carry irrigation water to farmers. Today, the one-time ditch rider's road—the route people on horseback (and, later, Model T's and trucks) followed to manage water delivery—has evolved into a playground for the tens of thousands of people who live near it. But because the High Line wasn't designed as a trail, way-finding can be difficult, and there are gaps and deviations along the path (e.g., the fact that you have to start at Mile 2 to reach Mile 0, then double back if you want to say you traversed the whole thing).

Thankfully, connectivity is on its way. Eleven years ago, the High Line Canal Conservancy was formed to lead planning efforts as the

Recreationists flock to this crushed gravel portion of the trail near Mile 30.

thruway morphed from a water utility into a regional recreational amenity and stormwater management corridor for the Front Range. The nonprofit and local government partners will oversee more than $100 million in trail investments over the next five years. Those funds will increase neighborhood access points, enhance signage, create safer crossings, restore natural resources through invasive species removal and tree plantings, and build pocket parks and shade structures.

More than 60 percent of those dollars will be used in the northeast segments—27 miles that cross Denver and Aurora and have been historically underinvested in. That's due to both the lack of canal water that flowed that far and the socioeconomic realities of the nearby communities, which didn't have the funds to devote to beautification projects and were less likely to be included in planning processes. That's changing, as many of the forthcoming initiatives were developed with neighborhood input. "The projects themselves will improve the trail as a more comfortable and welcoming space to be in," says Suzanna Fry Jones, the conservancy's chief programs and impact officer. The goal, she adds, is for the trail to become a community amenity.

1 million

Trail users annually

350,000

People who live within a mile of the High Line

And, of course, for more people to discover the beauty of the ditch. The High Line remains relatively unknown to many Coloradans: Even those who live along it and consider it their backyard trail may not realize the full scope of the canal, Fry Jones says. Here, our guide to exploring the route today—and for years to come.

Courtesy of Denver Water

Date Lines

Key moments in the High Line Canal's 142-year history.

1881

As the Front Range's population booms following the Gold Rush, James Duff, a Scot, and Benjamin Harrison Eaton, an entrepreneur who became the governor of Colorado, realize there might be money to be made by moving water from the South Platte River to the region's farmers and ranchers. The project is financed by British investors operating as the Northern Colorado Irrigation Company, and construction of the High Line Canal begins.

1883

The hand-dug canal is completed. Its name derives from an engineering principle that relies on terrain and elevation change to move water via gravity. The ditch drops two feet per mile as it follows the high points of the topography, which explains its seemingly random, curving configuration.

1924

The utility now called Denver Water acquires the High Line for $1.05 million. At its peak, the corridor helps irrigate more than 20,000 acres.

1970

After years of rule-breakers tubing (still prohibited), walking, cross-country skiing, and otherwise enjoying the canal, Denver Water lifts some restrictions and begins conversations about creating an official recreational trail.

1975

The canal is designated a National Waterworks Landmark.

2014

The High Line Canal Conservancy is created to develop a comprehensive plan to preserve the route.

2024

Forty-five miles of the High Line are transferred to Arapahoe County with a conservation easement, meaning they're permanently protected as open space. (Denver Water still owns a majority of the remaining miles, which it hopes to permanently protect.)

RUNNING DRY

The waterway has long struggled to achieve its initial purpose. Denver Water still has customers along the High Line, but the utility hasn't run water for them since 2021; the canal's relatively junior water rights mean there's rarely any available. Even if there were, around 70 percent of water sent via the route is lost to seepage or evaporation. "The canal is an inefficient way to deliver water in the 21st century," says Josh Phillips, the High Line Canal Conservancy's senior director of planning and implementation.

Along The Way

Plan your rest breaks around the historical sites, floral hot spots, and public art that pepper the 71-mile route.

Mile 0

The High Line Canal begins at a 145-year-old diversion dam. Those who want to hike the full length need to walk two miles into Waterton Canyon to the dam, then turn around and walk back to Waterton Road and cross the street to link up with the rest of the trail.

Mile 6

As you saunter past Denver Polo Club, make sure to yield for the horses (and their riders) that frequent this section.

Mile 14

Three historical wooden flumes—bridgelike structures that once conveyed water over lower elevations—remain on the route, including one that sits above Mary Gulch at Mile 14. (A second, the Bennett flume, is at Mile 17.5.)

Mile 14.5

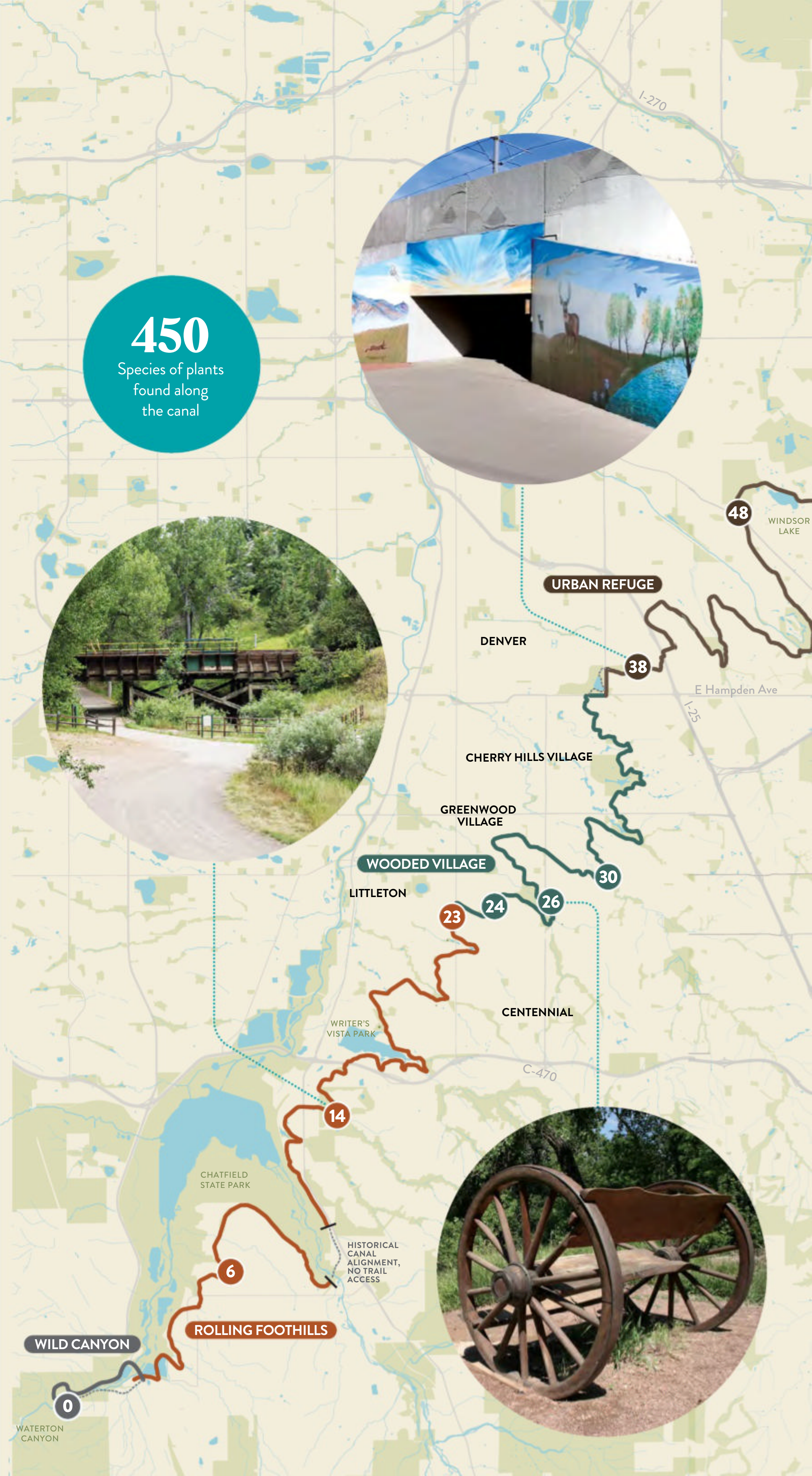
It's possible to grab some free snacks along the trail in September and October, courtesy of apple, pear, chokecherry, and plum trees near Fly'n B Park.

Mile 23 to 24

Keep your eyes peeled for the Imagination Tree (a wooden sign, painted rocks, and various baubles are clues you're looking at the correct cottonwood), which inspired Centennial residents Joan Bast and Joanie Bolton to pen *The Imagination Tree! Where Dreams Begin!*, a 2024 children's book.

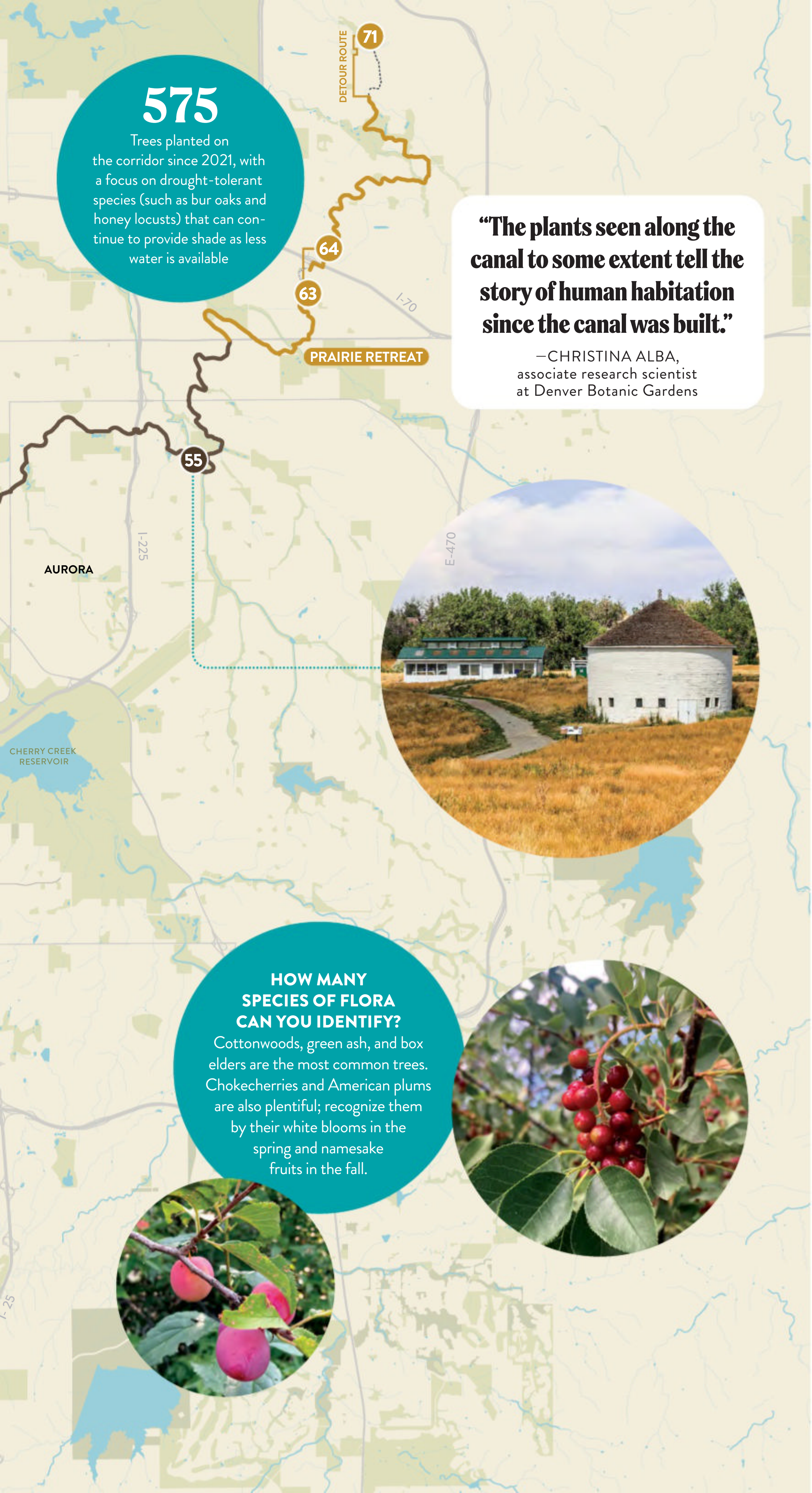
Mile 26.25

You've reached one of the most photographed spots on the canal: a bench designed to look like the front seat of a wagon. Sit down and look for the eagles and great horned owls that sometimes hang out in the area.



450
Species of plants found along the canal

I-270
48
WINDSOR LAKE
URBAN REFUGE
DENVER
38
E Hampden Ave
I-25
CHERRY HILLS VILLAGE
GREENWOOD VILLAGE
WOODED VILLAGE
30
LITTLETON
26
24
23
CENTENNIAL
WRITER'S VISTA PARK
C-470
14
CHATFIELD STATE PARK
HISTORICAL CANAL ALIGNMENT, NO TRAIL ACCESS
6
ROLLING FOOTHILLS
WILD CANYON
0
WATERTON CANYON



575

Trees planted on the corridor since 2021, with a focus on drought-tolerant species (such as bur oaks and honey locusts) that can continue to provide shade as less water is available

> **“The plants seen along the canal to some extent tell the story of human habitation since the canal was built.”**
>
> —CHRISTINA ALBA, associate research scientist at Denver Botanic Gardens

HOW MANY SPECIES OF FLORA CAN YOU IDENTIFY?

Cottonwoods, green ash, and box elders are the most common trees. Chokecherries and American plums are also plentiful; recognize them by their white blooms in the spring and namesake fruits in the fall.

Mile 30.5

There were originally 165 head gates to control water flow along the canal. You can still see many of them, including number 69 here (which is black and orange but missing its wheel on top), if you keep a close eye on the ditch as you walk.

Mile 38

Public art, like the “High Line Sunrise” painting by local father-and-son team Jay and Jerry Jaramillo that decorates the I-25 underpass at Mile 38, is present all along the canal. (Ceramic birds hide at Mile 29; carvings made into old cottonwoods sit between Miles 39 and 42; and clouds hang above a pedestrian bridge at Mile 54.)

Mile 48

Fairmount Cemetery is Denver’s second oldest and the final resting place for 19 governors plus other notable figures in the city’s history, such as Emily Griffith and Helen Bonfils.

Mile 55

Take a quick detour and walk the short path to the DeLaney Round Barn. Built in 1902, it’s on the National Register of Historic Places and thought to be the last remaining structure of its kind in the state.

Mile 63.5

Photo op: A faded wooden boat is an unexpected sight in the prairie.

Mile 64

Completed in June 2024, this pedestrian bridge closed one of the last remaining trail gaps along the canal.

Mile 71

Technically, the last segment of the High Line is not open to the public, so anyone looking to complete the full route will have to rely on a trail detour to nab 71 full miles—at least for now. Plans for a new housing development include access to the ditch and will move the trail’s end closer to its original termination point.

Works In Progress

Major improvements are on the way all along the canal, but we're especially excited about these five.

STUDENT AMENITIES

Expected Completion: 2026
Where: Miles 57–59
What: The canal passes by Aurora's William C. Hinkley High School and Laredo Elementary School. In response to community input, shade structures, an outdoor classroom, an overlook at Granby Ditch, and more will be added to improve access to the corridor and inspire students to spend time in nature. A new art project, around Mile 58, will also see dead and dying trees transformed into sculptures; area students helped Chilean-born artist Adolfo Romero complete the works.
Why: The northeast stretch of the High Line is less developed than earlier segments. In December 2022, the High Line Canal Conservancy launched a group called the Northeast Advisory Committee to lead community focus groups and help implement what it calls "priority improvement projects." This is one of them.

FLOOD MITIGATION

Expected Completion: Ongoing
Where: Entire canal
What: It may not be a sexy topic, but stormwater (water resulting from rain or snow) is part of the future of the canal, an obvious landing point for runoff that doesn't seep into the ground. A multiyear project, currently in the planning stages, is underway to add green infrastructure like berms and constructed overflows to manage potential spill locations.
Why: Better stormwater management mitigates flood risk while also supporting animal and plant habitats and reducing the urban heat island effect.

SAFER ROAD CROSSINGS

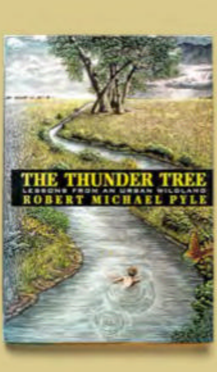
Expected Completion: 2028/2029
Where: Mile 59
What: The first of three East Colfax Avenue crossings is set to get an upgrade in the next couple of years: an underpass at the road's intersection with Laredo Street that will make the spot much safer. (Users, including area schoolkids, must currently walk across a road with no lights or crosswalks.)
Why: The High Line Canal trail makes 100 street crossings, some of which force users to navigate heavy vehicle traffic. A number of major crossings, such as Hampden Avenue and Colorado Boulevard, have seen underpasses added in recent years, and more are on their way, including at East Yale Avenue and South Holly Street.

CONNECTIVITY

Expected Completion: TBD
Where: Miles 9.75–11
What: Douglas County is studying alternative approaches to connecting one of the last remaining gaps along the canal, but an exact plan for how to address the break is still in the works.
Why: Plum Creek has a significant trail interruption where private property forces users trying to log as many official canal miles as possible to do a confusing out-and-back from Roxborough Park Road trailhead, then pick the route back up near Mile 11.

INTERPRETIVE SIGNS

Expected Completion: TBD
Where: Miles 0–2
What: To better tell the origin story of the High Line Canal, improvements are planned for the trailhead, and additional interpretive signage and two overlooks are in progress. Douglas County will eventually build a short connector trail between the trailhead that goes to the origin point and the start of Mile 2, which are currently separated and require a short walk down Waterton Road.
Why: For such a major historical site, there are almost no indicators of where you are beyond a single sign at the diversion dam. Many users are likely exploring Waterton Canyon versus purposefully setting out on the High Line—a reality the conservancy would like to change.



BOOK TOUR

In 1993, Robert Michael Pyle published *The Thunder Tree*, a memoir about growing up and adventuring along the High Line in the 1950s and '60s. The tree that inspired the title is still standing near Mile 52.

Previous spread: Courtesy of High Line Canal Conservancy (wagon wheel bench, chokecherries, plums, underpass); Evan Anderman/Courtesy of High Line Canal Conservancy (wooden flume, barn)

Zone Coverage

The canal's incredible span means it passes through a variety of habitats. The conservancy and local government partners developed five character zones that showcase the distinctive personalities along the High Line. We break down how to best enjoy each.

IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR...	HEAD TO...	BECAUSE...
A history lesson	**Wild Canyon** (Miles 0–2)	As you hike or bike to the diversion dam that marks the ditch's start, you'll see current Denver Water equipment as well as buildings from the historical Kassler Water Treatment Plant, Denver's first such facility. (Also look out for the herd of Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep that lives in the canyon.)
Bird-watching opportunities	**Rolling Foothills** (Miles 2–23.5)	There are more than 30 birding hot spots along the canal. Platte Canyon Reservoir, between Miles 2 and 3, showcases some of the greatest diversity of species; keep an eye (and an ear) out for spotted towhees, Western kingbirds, and double-crested cormorants.
A ride on horseback	**Wooded Village** (Miles 23.5–37.5)	Under the shade of cottonwoods, the spacious paths in this zone and the nature preserve it passes through (as well as the views into Cherry Hills Village backyards) create a bucolic setting for a leisurely ride.
Ideal cycling terrain	**Urban Refuge** (Miles 37.5–60)	The hard-surface trail will be easy on your wheels, plus this swath offers connectivity to a number of neighborhood and regional routes, including the Cherry Creek Trail.
Lots of flowers and plants	**Prairie Retreat** (Miles 60–71)	The prairie may seem like an unlikely place to view flora, but in 2023, a group of conservancy volunteers deposited 173 native prairie plants in a wild garden near Mile 65, where you can spot scarlet globe mallow, spiderwort, and prairie coneflower. Of course, blooms abound throughout the canal, from blue ridge carrion flowers in Waterton Canyon to the perennials planted by the senior community that abuts the High Line near Mile 49.

This spread: Evan Anderman/Courtesy of High Line Canal Conservancy (construction); Sarah Banks (book); Courtesy of High Line Canal Conservancy (tree planting)

Helping Hands

Three ways to support the High Line Canal.

1

Join a High Line Canal Conservancy–hosted cleanup or brush-removal event to help beautify the canal, keep it safe for visitors, and reduce fuel for fires. (A self-directed cleanup program, where you grab the necessary supplies at the conservancy's canal-adjacent office in Centennial and pick up trash on your own walk, is available too.)

2

Make the canal more accessible for all by conducting a walk audit to evaluate pedestrian safety. (The worksheet is accessible on the conservancy's website, highlinecanal.org, and can be completed on your own time.)

3

Buy a ticket to the conservancy's annual fundraiser, Dine for the High Line, on September 12.

High & Not Dry

I earned my High Liner badge by cycling the full 71-mile trail—but I had to ford a river to do it.

It was while I was holding my bike overhead, navigating waist-deep water in a marsh next to Plum Creek in Littleton, that I realized I didn't know a thing about the High Line Canal.

Living on the west side of Denver, I'd heard about the storied urban route, but I'd never had much reason to explore it. So, when I decided to ride the entire trail over the course of two days, I didn't realize that it was 71 miles long or that only about half of it was paved. Or, as I was experiencing firsthand, that those miles aren't exactly connected.

I started on a Friday afternoon on my road bike, beginning where the trail technically ends—just east of Peña Boulevard, across from the Gaylord Rockies Resort & Convention Center. I followed the High Line Canal Conservancy's map, cruising a concrete path through a suburban neighborhood, then a gated golf course community. I rode alone and passed few others along the way. Prairie dogs and wrens were my most frequent companions.

A few miles in, the path became more wooded, and I saw my first official High Line Canal trail sign. Despite that marker, route-finding proved challenging, requiring me to cross busy streets like East Colfax Avenue and hopscotch across sidewalks. I found that the canal itself became the best way to get my bearings. Whenever I started to worry that I'd made a wrong turn, I'd seek out the low-flowing ditch and carry on. Three hours of cycling later, I reached my destination: Denver's Mamie D. Eisenhower Park. Thirty-three miles down.

> **"Each portion of the canal has its own unique beauty, and that's what's important—the fact that there's beauty everywhere. You need [to see it all] to experience it."**
>
> —DEBI HUNTER HOLEN, High Line Canal Conservancy board member

When I returned to the High Line on Memorial Day, I did so with company (my 75-year-old uncle, Pat). We hopped on our electric gravel bikes at the Waterton Canyon parking lot and rode to the dam and the official start of the trail. As we cruised along the first nine, muddy miles, I thought my canal woes were behind me. Then we saw a sign that indicated the route would dead-end southeast of Chatfield Reservoir due to private property. (Plans to connect what's known as the Plum Creek gap are underway; see "Works In Progress" on page 84.) The way-finding map didn't offer a detour, and we didn't think to double back through Chatfield State Park.

Which is how we found ourselves traversing a quick-flowing creek. Once we crossed the water and climbed the embankment, we reunited with the High Line alongside U.S. 85—bewildered, soggy, and with pebbles in our shoes.

The remainder of the ride was less eventful and surprisingly beautiful, given its urban location. We rode a mostly gravel trail through parks and nature preserves and ogled perfectly manicured backyards in neighborhoods I'd otherwise never have visited. By the time we reached Colorado Boulevard again, we had traveled 42 miles. We never left the metro, but I felt like I'd been worlds away. —**JAY BOUCHARD**

The author pedals by "We Are Future Strata," an installation by Salida artist Michael Buckley near Mile 37.

Urban Essentials

The High Line snakes through six cities, meaning thru-travelers (aka High Liners) can't camp but can access creature comforts along the route. We asked conservancy board member Debi Hunter Holen, who has walked the full length over a three-day span multiple times, for her tips.

WEAR SNEAKERS

Hiking boots are designed for uneven trails, not paved walkways. Sneakers work just fine on the High Line. An extra pair of socks never hurts, though.

PACK LIGHT

Carry snacks and enough water for the day, but between public parks, main arteries, and general access to urban amenities, you don't need to load up as if you're going off the grid. (Hunter Holen's favorite trail snack? Hi-Chews.)

GET TO KNOW THE CANAL BEFOREHAND (AND TAKE THE CONSERVANCY'S TRAIL MAP)

Because it wasn't originally designed as a trail, the High Line can get a little wonky. There are still gaps in the route, and wayfinding kiosks can be intermittent (though the conservancy has added more than 180 signs and mile markers, with more to come). Three sections, including the start of the trail in Waterton Canyon, require you to retrace your steps (go out and back) to log every official mile because the trail is disconnected. Heads up: That also means you'll actually be walking a few more than 71 miles.

WHEN YOU SEE A BATHROOM, USE IT

The southwest portion of the trail has plenty of toilet access, but latrines become sparser after you pass James A. Bible Park. Look for public toilets in parks or at area businesses; there's also one at Fairmount Cemetery.

INDULGE IN SOME PIT STOPS

Hunter Holen's favorite bakery—Manna Bakery & Deli—is just across the road near Mile 22. If your feet aren't too worn out, side trips for a treat (and a seat) are easily accomplished. Other ideas: Sonder Coffee & Tea is 0.3 miles off the trail, near Mile 46, and Dry Dock Brewing Co. sits just past Mile 63.

Play Time

Four destinations along the canal for fun-seekers of all ages.

1 **WHEN YOU WANT TO... SPLASH**
Head into Waterton Canyon via the Origin Trail. The diversion dam—about two miles down a wide, dirt road—is a great spot to cast for rainbow and brown trout or splash around. Shaded picnic tables are made for snack time.

2 **WHEN YOU WANT TO... SWING**
A number of playgrounds are accessible just off the canal, including at Writer's Vista Park (Mile 18.5), Expo Park (Mile 50.25), and Norfolk Glen Park (near Mile 59.75).

3 **WHEN YOU WANT TO... COMPETE**
Expo Park's disc golf course parallels the canal. Beware: The venue is known for its water hazards.

4 **WHEN YOU WANT TO... RIDE**
Explorers ages seven and older can join Littleton's Sagebrush Stables for a two-hour, historian-led trail ride along the canal's southern stretch. ▲

The Feed.
The Feed.
910
DAVID
100 MILE
naked

HAS DAVID ROCHE CRACKED THE CODE OR IS HE JUST ANOTHER CRACKPOT?

THE BOULDER ATHLETE CLAIMS TO HAVE DEVELOPED A RADICAL RECIPE TO REVOLUTIONIZE LONG-DISTANCE RUNNING. I DECIDED TO FIND OUT IF HIS TRAINING PROGRAM WOULD MAKE ME FASTER ON THE TRAILS—AND, MAYBE, BETTER AT LIFE.

BY SPENCER CAMPBELL • PHOTOGRAPH BY CODY BARE

THE LEADVILLE TRAIL 100 IS ONE OF THE WORLD'S MOST DAUNTING FOOTRACES.

The iconic Colorado ultramarathon demands more than 18,000 feet of climbing, rarely dips lower than 10,000 feet of elevation, and exposes runners to extreme temperature fluctuations. The conditions have humbled some of the greatest names in the sport. Anton Krupicka's legs stopped functioning at mile 76. Even Matt Carpenter, who set the course record in 2005, wilted in his first attempt. His knees refused to bend after 67 miles.

In August 2024, David Roche decided to disrespect Leadville. A professional coach and runner from Boulder, he'd never competed in a race longer than 62 miles. But Roche was a man of faith—or, rather, a man of science. He had concocted a training regimen based on rigorous academic study he believed would enable him to mock Leadville's brick-wall inclines, razor-thin air, and ever-changing weather by running every step of all 100 miles. Despite enduring waves of online skepticism, the skinny, 37-year-old former environmental lawyer surprised everyone: He ran Leadville in 15 hours, 26 minutes, and 34 seconds, winning last year's edition by half an hour. More important, Roche shattered Carpenter's mark by 16 minutes.

Roche says: "Matt [Carpenter] is a GOAT, who was better than I could dream of being. How can you compete with someone whose VO2 max was one of the highest ever recorded, and who trained with methodical focus in a way that was ahead of his time? Answer: I'd need to disrespect the distance by pushing harder." *—Instagram*

Five months after Roche notched the Leadville record, my brother and I drove southwest out of Austin toward Texas' rugged Hill Country. Daniel is a committed amateur ultrarunner. During the past 10 years, he'd run 75 miles around Mt. Rainier, a 24-hour race called the Black Mountain Monster, and all 50 miles of the Grand Canyon's Rim-to-Rim-to-Rim route. For his newest challenge, he'd begun training for his first 100-miler and asked me to crew for him during a 100K (62 miles) "warmup" race.

I was honored. Every family has its overachiever, and Daniel is ours. He co-owns a successful real estate business, has been married to his high school sweetheart for more than 20 years, keeps an immaculate backyard, and has raised two happy, smart, polite boys. His judgment is so sound that our father made Daniel, the third of his four kids, the executor of his estate.

Determined not to let him down, I asked Daniel about his approach to the race. He launched into a lesson on carbs, telling me how the body expends amazing amounts of energy during ultramarathons and how runners have taken to replenishing their stores with tiny packets of gel—essentially, sugar. He'd used gel before, but Daniel told me he planned to drastically increase his consumption during this event. The strategy was not his own. "There's this guy named David Roche…," he began. Since winning the so-called Race Across the Sky, Roche had shared the details of his training regimen on a podcast hosted by Rich Roll, a wellness influencer whom my brother listens to religiously.

The race kicked off at 8 a.m. and consisted of two loops of about 31 miles each. Daniel predicted he'd complete the first around 1 p.m., which would require running each mile in 11 minutes. I took my position at the midway aid station and prepared the Jetboil for broth, lined up the snacks, and laid out new clothes. Eventually, the appointed time came. No Daniel. Another hour, still no sign of him. I began to worry.

Around 4 p.m., three hours later than his prediction, Daniel finally approached the aid station. Normally lighthearted and game for some goading, he remained grimly silent when I jokingly mentioned his late arrival. He stared into the surrounding hills, like he was scanning for a rescue party to airlift him off this rock-infested land. Blood trickled from his knee. Most concerning was his coloring. He'd thrown up a pile of gel on the side of the trail and was now frighteningly pale.

LIFETIME LEADVILLE

From top: **The author before a training run on North Table Mountain in Golden; Roche after winning Leadville**

THE FACT THAT DANIEL had struggled so mightily to reach a mere 31 miles—half a mile above sea level in Texas—seemed to confirm a suspicion I'd long harbored about Roche and his strategies.

I'd interviewed Roche a few years earlier while writing a beginner's guide to trail running. A Maryland native, Roche had already established himself as a major figure in ultrarunning through his Some Work All Play coaching service, which trains professionals such as Grayson Murphy and Allie Ostrander. He'd also earned a reputation as the mad scientist of ultrarunning by writing long, science-heavy stories for *Trail Runner* magazine.

I'd hoped Roche would outline specific tips that would make the sport easier for newbies. The perfect angle of thigh thrust necessary to scale an incline, for example, or exactly how many ounces of electrolytes to drink on a long run. Instead, I can only remember him talking about *love* and *patience* and *giving it your best*. Roche's advice sounded more like a wedding toast than practical counsel. This previous experience combined with my brother's epic spew made me wonder if the emperor might, in fact, be naked.

I wanted to interview Roche again. Over the past few years, I'd become increasingly disgruntled with health trends and the wellness gurus who hawk them. Cold plunges, foam-rolling, the all-bean diet. Each new fad promises better performance, better recovery, a better existence. Their extraordinary benefits turn out to be rather average, but not before leaving you feeling like you're the one who's failed. At the same time, it was difficult to ignore Roche's results. Maybe if I dug deeper and evaluated his methods firsthand, I could discover whether his training method was innovative or snake oil wrapped in science.

Roche responded to my email immediately. He couldn't participate. He'd just had his second kid and was "too time crunched" for a story.

I couldn't blame him. I have two young boys. My four-year-old, Tommy, is blond with green eyes and recently jumped into the pool and swam to the other side all by himself; I'd never felt such a mix of terror, joy, and pride. My 11-month-old, Hank, is a portly gentleman who looks a little like Winston Churchill and absolutely beams whenever he sees anyone. "You know," his daycare teacher once said, "me and that little one have a special relationship." My wife and I didn't have the heart to tell her how promiscuous he is.

He's the perfect baby—aside from the fact that he wakes up every morning between 4 and 5:30. Tommy doesn't fall asleep until 9 p.m. In between these bookends, my wife and I are constantly in motion: preparing the kids for school, working full-time jobs, cleaning the house, juggling the nighttime routine. We're not defeated because we're winning, but it's a war of attrition. I recently played dead while Tommy licked my nose for at least three minutes at bedtime. He eventually fell asleep. The only thing I lost was some dignity.

Well, that and my time. My wife and I want to be successful at parenting and at our jobs. We love both. But attending an afternoon daycare recital or staying home with an infant who has two pink eyes and a double ear infection (at the same time!) requires catching up on work in our spare time. Suddenly, my schedule is filled with nonnegotiable responsibilities. The only reliable slice of time left that I own anymore is the hour between daycare drop-off and the start of my workday. In that space, I jog—slowly and for no other reason than to clear my head.

Roche says: "I am here to demonstrate what love mixed with being a tough motherfucker looks like." —Outside *magazine*

I think this sense of a shared experience with him explains why I couldn't stop thinking about Roche after he declined my interview request. On one of my three-mile runs by the creek near my house, I listened to his appearance on Roll's podcast. "I just wanted to have a day out there," Roche said. "Whether it was a good day or a really hard day, it was going to be *my* day."

Perhaps it was selfish, but I wanted that too. I wanted a purpose outside of my family. I wanted a goal that didn't include putting an infant to bed or wiping a toddler's butt. By finally spilling his secrets, maybe Roche had made that possible. Maybe Daniel had just done the program wrong. Maybe I could do better. Maybe, I thought, Roche was the real deal.

Roche says: "The goal of a coach is to get someone to shoot a shot that they're scared of. One, because that's how you learn. But two, unless you shoot 100 of them and miss 100 of them...you're never going to have that one you swish from half court." —The Rich Roll Podcast

I FOUND THE HUMAN Potential Running Series on the internet. Not only did the name seem divined by the running gods, but the

This spread: Cody Bare (Roche's head, Roche's Leadville 100 finish); James Stukenberg (Campbell)

From top: The author in his "I can't do this" phase; the gels and other goodies that make up Roche's recipe

Granby event offered a 21-mile course that climbed nearly 4,000 feet up green slopes and looked out at the Indian Peaks Wilderness. (My best friend also lives there, so I had a place to stay.) The race was in mid-June, seven weeks away.

I entered my information, put $118.28 on my credit card, and started training. Even if I didn't know why, I figured gel would be important, so I bought a fistful of individual Honey Stinger fruit-smoothie-flavored packets at the grocery store for about two bucks apiece and sucked them down indiscriminately. I borrowed my brother's years-old Garmin Forerunner 55 running watch to clock just how slow I'd been lumbering. (Very.) I refused to buy trail shoes—too expensive—figuring my Brooks road soles would work fine. And I immersed myself in Roche. I listened to his interview with Roll again, dug into his *Trail Runner* archive going back years, and read interviews he gave to *Scientific Triathlon* and *Defector*. I let his mantras—"Impress yourself," "Dream so big," "You are loved and enough as you are"—wash over me.

Much of Roche's recipe evolved from new science on old ingredients. Ultrarunners typically consume 60 to 90 grams of carbs per hour. Roche learned from pro cycling coaches that athletes who exert intense effort can dial that number up to 120. Sodium bicarbonate, aka baking soda, boosts performance by reducing lactic acid, but its gains were long mitigated by an accompanying urgency to poop. Roche said a company called Maurten had developed a product that was easier on the gut. Ketones are energy-producing compounds made by the liver that supplement companies market as fuel. Roche admits there's no strong evidence to support that claim, but 2023 research in the *American Journal of Physiology-Endocrine and Metabolism* showed they created higher levels of natural EPO—even if, he concedes, they "taste like a robot's ass." Extreme athletes often train in 100-plus-degree heat to thicken their red blood cells. Roche believes you can reap the same reward by sitting passively in a hot tub or sauna.

These prescriptions weren't magic. You still had to work. Most ultrarunners train by stacking mileage. Runners preparing for a 100-miler will sometimes log 100 miles per week to ready their legs for the competitive strain. In the lead-up to Leadville, Roche ran 60 to 75 miles per week. He supplemented that with strength training, buying a squat bar for his house. He rode his bike around Boulder. He maintains that the best way to quickly improve your VO2 max, which measures how much oxygen your body can wring from its circulatory system during workouts, is through short bursts up hills. Speed intervals lead to a quicker pace.

Roche says: "I am 36 going on 22, and that's because carbs let me push harder on the day and then adapt faster than ever before.... [This approach to fueling] is the most emphatic performance revolution we will ever see in all of endurance sports." —Outside *magazine*

My first week of training was everything I'd hoped for. Whereas previously I'd plodded along to the glacial rhythm of Ira Glass' nasal monotone, I now raced to the lashing thump of Taylor Swift's righteous woe. I abandoned the same trail I'd run almost daily for years in search of longer, more rugged paths. While on my first long run, about 11 miles, I shot out of a stretch of woods into a clearing at the base of a rock face. A lone climber had just descended. My sudden arrival startled us both into stillness. Seconds passed. Finally, I said, "Good job." He replied, "You too."

Like Swift, I soon encountered my own heartbreak. A cold gripped me the Wednesday of my second week, followed by a stomach bug that passed like an unholy spirit through Hank, Tommy, my wife, and, finally, me.

Even after the most putrid effects of the illness waned, my body remained sluggish for weeks. I'd sprinted into my training with 9.5-minute miles but now struggled to maintain an 11. I walked up hills. The rubber band of my running watch irritated my skin. More often than not, I'd tear it from my wrist and shove it into my pocket. The training schedule I'd downloaded from Roche's website called for longer and longer runs. The time I set aside each morning for running invaded office and family hours. I missed birthday parties and a boat trip with my family. My wife regularly took the kids to the park without me. I had to confine my long runs to Saturdays, and then I'd complain about how exhausted I was for the rest of the weekend. Whenever I lowered myself to the floor to play Magna-Tiles with Tommy and Hank, I croaked an old-man grunt. I usually ended up lying on the carpet as one or the other, or both, climbed aboard my supine body.

I worried I'd made a mistake. My pace wasn't getting better, I was always exhausted, and my life felt even more constricted.

James Stukenberg (2)

I blamed Roche. His advice began to seem less like wisdom and more like mysticism. Back in April 2024, Roche was riding his bike in Boulder when a car hit him. He suffered a broken wrist and a concussion. The collision didn't cause lasting damage, and Roche began running in a sling the following week. In fact, the wreck may have been the reason he didn't get tired at Leadville. "I think that there might have been a change [with] my accident in my brain," Roche told Roll. I listened to that podcast episode again during the worst part of my training. In my dispirited state, it sounded like Roche believed a radioactive spider had turned him into a superhero.

Roche says: "I am so happy to be alive!… I was having so much fun on that bike ride, and the next morning, I can remember thinking just before the accident: *if this isn't nice, I don't know what is*. When I woke up in the ambulance, and the call got through to [my wife] Megan, I remember thinking the same thing." —*Instagram*

My feet, legs, and back ached. I was so tired I sometimes collapsed on the guest bed in my home office during work. But the emotional pain hurt the worst. One day we were in the playroom when I got a message from daycare on my phone. "Hey, Tommy," I announced excitedly, "Daddy's coming to school for doughnuts for Father's Day!" The words had barely left my mouth when I realized I would be out of town that Friday in preparation for the race. When I told him I couldn't attend (shamelessly spinning it as a "work trip"), his Disney-princess eyes filled with tears and his lower lip trembled tragically: "But who's going to go to school with me?"

Roche says: "I stacked aerobic bricks for 18 years, and it took those years of hard work for some commentators who haven't been following on Strava to view me as an overnight success. [Winning Leadville] is for the brick-stackers." —*Strava*

WITH ONLY THREE WEEKS before my human potential was due for judgment in Granby Ranch, I had no choice but to push—run every mile of every scheduled workout, finish every sprint, guzzle every gel. That Monday, I fed the kids breakfast, dressed them for school, and dropped them off. Then, as I drove back to my house, it started to pour. I begrudgingly wrestled my feet into my running shoes anyway.

The instant I opened the garage door, the rain stopped. The sun appeared. I pressed play on "Love Story" and took off.

I noticed a strength in my gait that had been missing. For the first time in a long time, my legs were striding for extra ground instead of struggling to stay upright.

As I felt my pace quicken almost effortlessly, I wondered: *Was Roche's prescription finally working?* I repledged my allegiance. I bought two cases of Precision Fuel gels because he used them. I chugged 24 ounces of water before each run to acclimate my stomach to all the gel and liquids I'd need to down during the race, just like he did. (Roche copied techniques perfected by competitive eaters.) I visited three different stores to find ketones.

I also got tougher. I completed my longest prerace run, 17 miles, on the last day of May. I posted my fastest paces during the final three miles. Even more astonishingly, I started to welcome the punishment of the path. The trail I ran on was dotted with rocks and scree that jabbed into my feet. Rather than try to avoid them, I began to seek out the sharpest edges. I hooked my toes over small crags and pushed off to feel my aching shins stretch into agony. I screamed "Yeah!" when stones stuck me and "Break me!" when my shins felt like snapping. I'd never been more impressed with myself.

The final race email reined in my confidence. In my excitement over my cosmic connection with the organizer's name, I'd failed to examine the course. The elevation profile looked like waves children draw—a series of sharply angled swells. I'd yet to train in real mountains.

Sensing my anxiety, my wife encouraged me to travel to the high country a week early to acclimate to the thin air. Tommy agreed to forget about the whole doughnuts-with-dad crisis, but only if we packed him off to Grandma's house for the weekend. And Hank? He woke up extra early to see me off. Still, it was difficult to shake the notion that I was leaving them behind.

"HANKY SAID HI TO ME," my wife texted soon after I left. Confirmation of my son's first word—and

CONTINUED ON PAGE 176

TOP DOCTORS 5280 2025 DENVER

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5280 TOP DOCTOR PROFILES

2025

Choosing the right doctor for you and your family can be a challenge. In this special section, we highlight the 2025 Top Doctors who have chosen to share more information with you about their practices and expertise.

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E. TAYLOR ABEL, MD

AMIT AGARWALA, MD

JESSE CHRASTIL, MD

MICHAEL ELLMAN, MD

DANIEL HABER, MD

MICHAEL HORNER, DO

RONALD HUGATE, MD

PATRICK MCNAIR, MD

ROGER MURKEN, MD

NIMESH PATEL, MD

MARK ROBINSON, MD

ORTHOPEDIC SURGERY, NEUROLOGICAL SURGERY, SURGERY OF THE HAND, SPORTS MEDICINE, PHYSICAL MEDICINE & REHABILITATION

PANORAMA ORTHOPEDICS & SPINE CENTER

PANORAMA
Orthopedics & Spine Center

Congratulations to our 21 physicians recognized as 5280 Top Doctors. We are incredibly proud of our exceptional team and the outstanding care they provide to our community every day.

For over 60 years, Panorama Orthopedics & Spine Center has been metro Denver's trusted orthopedic provider. Our group of over 40 experts is one of the largest orthopedic groups in the United States, and these recognitions reflect our unwavering commitment to excellence in orthopedic care.

Our award-winning specialists cover the full spectrum of orthopedic medicine. We offer orthopedics specialists in sports medicine, orthopedic trauma, hand, wrist and elbow, foot and ankle, joint replacement, and spine care. In addition, we offer non-operative pain management specialists, physical therapists, and occupational therapists. Our entire team works together with one goal in mind: to help get you back to feeling good so you can lead an active life.

Our award-winning care is easy to access. Schedule online, book a same-day/next-day appointment, and visit us at any of our four locations across the Denver area.

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CHARLES GOTTLOB, MD

JAMES JOHNSON, MD

JEREMY KINDER, MD

MICHAEL LERSTEN, MD

MITCHEL ROBINSON, MD

EDMUND ROWLAND, MD

TODD VANDERHEIDEN, MD

E. TAYLOR ABEL, MD
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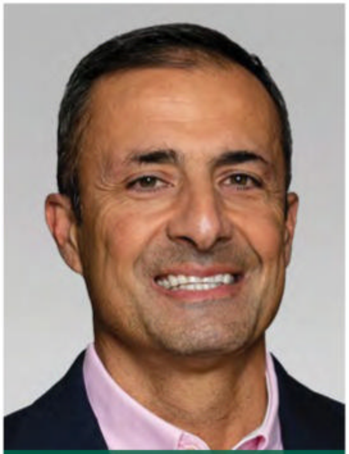
A. TODD ALIJANI, MD
4.9 ★★★★★

JEFFREY ARTHUR, MD
4.9 ★★★★★

RYAN CAUFIELD, MD
5.0 ★★★★★

IMRAN CHOUDHRY, MD
4.9 ★★★★★

DAVIS HURLEY, MD
4.9 ★★★★★

BRIAN LARKIN, MD
4.9 ★★★★★

ERIC LINDBERG, MD
4.9 ★★★★★

LAUREN MACTAGGART, MD
4.9 ★★★★★

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Colorado isn't a sit-down kind of state, and the team at Orthopedic Centers of Colorado understands that better than anyone. Our specialists have a true passion for the active Colorado lifestyle; it fuels our approach to help each patient achieve their personal goals.

Our diverse group of orthopedic specialists is dedicated to restoring mobility, alleviating pain, and enhancing the quality of life for all our patients. From fractures to joint replacements, sports injuries to degenerative conditions, to physical therapy and rehabilitation, our team is equipped with the knowledge, skills, and dedication to deliver unparalleled orthopedic care.

We know how muscle, bone, and joint injuries can stop you from doing what you love, and we're here to help. Every one of our dedicated, experienced orthopedic surgeons, doctors, and health specialists don't just care for you, they care about you, treating every patient as a whole person. This focused approach helps us design a customized treatment program so you can get moving again.

Whether you're a serious athlete or someone who's just as serious about getting back to the things you enjoy, Orthopedic Centers of Colorado is here for you. We'll help you achieve results that will get you moving again without any discomfort or pain. Ready to live the life you love again? Contact one of our conveniently located 14 offices across the Denver Front Range and Colorado Springs.

CARLTON CLINKSCALES , MD
G 4.9 ★★★★★

CHRISTOPHER D'AMBROSIA, MD
G 4.9 ★★★★★

JAMES FERRARI, MD
G 4.8 ★★★★★

HAROLD HUNT, MD
G 5.0 ★★★★★

JUSTIN NEWMAN, MD
G 4.9 ★★★★★

ANDREW PARKER, MD
G 4.9 ★★★★★

FRANK WYDRA, MD
G 4.9 ★★★★★

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR 2025 TOP DOCTORS!

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JEFFREY ARTHUR, MD
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MILLARD PLASTIC SURGERY

DR. DAVID HENDRICK ① 5280 Top Doctor 2025

DR. MERYL SINGER ① 5280 Top Doctor 2025

DR. JOHN MILLARD

DR. LAURA BOSCHINI

Dr. David Hendrick, triple-board-certified facial plastic surgeon with over 25 years of experience, specializes in Deep Plane Face and Necklifts at Millard Plastic Surgery. Known for his precision and dedication to natural, long-lasting results, Dr. Hendrick transforms his patients with subtle yet stunning outcomes. His military background as a Naval Nuclear Reactor Chief Engineer has honed his meticulous attention to detail, making him a trusted choice for those seeking rejuvenation that looks effortless. Dr. Hendrick's philosophy centers on empowering patients to enhance their appearance in a way that aligns with their personal goals and sense of self.

Dr. Meryl Singer, a highly skilled plastic surgeon with 15 years of experience, specializes in Mommy Makeovers at Millard Plastic Surgery. Known for her meticulous attention to detail and commitment to achieving natural, beautiful results, Dr. Singer combines surgical expertise with an intuitive understanding of her patients' needs. As an Assistant Professor at the University of Colorado, she has been recognized for her excellence in teaching, further solidifying her reputation as a leader in her field. Dr. Singer's approach is focused on helping patients regain confidence and feel like the best version of themselves.

MILLARD PLASTIC SURGERY: THE PREMIER DESTINATION FOR TIMELESS BEAUTY

Founded by the renowned Dr. John A. Millard in 2002, Millard Plastic Surgery has proudly been a leader in the Denver-area aesthetic industry for over two decades. Nestled in Douglas County, our practice is known for its unrivaled expertise, exceptional patient care, and personalized results. Dr. Millard, with his vision for excellence, has carefully assembled a team of highly trained surgeons, each specializing in distinct areas of plastic surgery. Whether you're considering a rejuvenating facelift, body contouring, or breast surgery, our surgeons bring years of experience, artistic skill, and cutting-edge techniques to achieve natural, long-lasting results.

Patients often remark on the transformative experience at Millard Plastic Surgery, where every consultation is a step towards achieving the best version of themselves. With a reputation for delivering unparalleled results, we are proud to be the trusted choice for those seeking beauty, confidence, and care they can rely on. When you choose Millard Plastic Surgery, you're not just choosing a practice—you're choosing a legacy of excellence.

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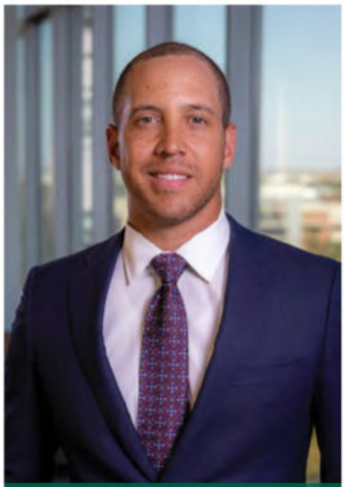
JAY ALBRIGHT, MD
Orthopedic Surgery



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Orthopedic Surgery

MARTIN BOUBLIK, MD
Orthopedic Surgery

JONATHAN BRAVMAN, MD
Orthopedic Surgery

SUMEET GARG, MD
Orthopedic Surgery

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Orthopedic Surgery

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Orthopedic Surgery

ORTHOPEDIC SURGERY & SURGERY OF THE HAND

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We're proud to recognize 17 of our physicians honored by their peers as 2025 Top Doctors—an achievement that reflects not only their clinical excellence but also their deep commitment to advancing the field of orthopedics.

At CU Orthopedics, our team of 150+ fellowship-trained specialists are at the forefront of innovation, academic research, and compassionate, evidence-based care. From routine cases to the most complex, our physicians use leading-edge surgical and non-surgical interventions to treat every orthopedic condition across every orthopedic specialty, including **adult reconstruction, foot and ankle, hand and upper extremity, orthopedic oncology, pediatric orthopedics, spine, sports medicine, and trauma.**

With locations across the Front Range, our reach is broad—but our focus remains personal, delivering expert care tailored to each patient.

To keep you moving, we never stop.

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Surgery of the Hand

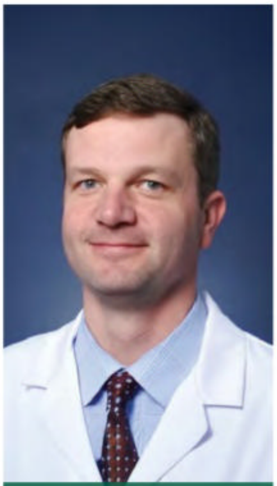
SAYAN DE, MD
Orthopedic Surgery

JASON DRAGOO, MD
Orthopedic Surgery

MARK ERICKSON, MD
Orthopedic Surgery

T. JAY KLEEMAN, MD
Orthopedic Surgery

CYRIL MAUFFREY, MD
Orthopedic Surgery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Orthopedic Surgery

KLANE WHITE, MD
Orthopedic Surgery

MICHELLE WOLCOTT, MD
Orthopedic Surgery

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PLASTIC SURGERY

THE LaVIE INSTITUTE

LILY DANIALI, MD, FACS

① 5280 Top Doctor 2025

BENSON PULIKKOTTIL, MD, FACS

① 5280 Top Doctor 2025

Dr. Lily Daniali: Expert in Aesthetic and Reconstructive Plastic Surgery

Double board-certified plastic surgeon Dr. Lily Daniali is known for her exceptional skill in aesthetic and reconstructive surgery, with a special emphasis on breast surgery, burn reconstruction, and complex trauma. As a female plastic surgeon, Dr. Daniali brings a deeply empathetic and intuitive approach to her work, blending artistry with advanced surgical precision.

Dr. Daniali's surgical training is among the most rigorous in the nation. A Woodrow Wilson Fellow at Johns Hopkins University and an honors graduate of the University of Washington School of Medicine, she completed her plastic surgery residency at Rutgers Biomedical & Health Sciences. She then pursued additional fellowship training in both Craniofacial Surgery and Hand & Microsurgery.

At the Burn and Reconstructive Center at Swedish, Dr. Daniali leads life-changing reconstructive efforts for patients who have suffered traumatic injuries, burns, or cancer. Her technical expertise and calm presence offer comfort and hope to patients navigating the most difficult moments of their lives.

In her aesthetic practice, Dr. Daniali is especially sought-after for natural, elegant results in breast augmentation, breast lifts, and body contouring. Her deep experience in reconstructive surgery informs her aesthetic philosophy: enhancing beauty while preserving and honoring the body's natural form and function.

"It's an incredible privilege when patients come to me after months—or even years—of consideration. I never take their trust for granted," she says. "Whether a patient is healing from trauma or seeking to feel confident in their own skin, I listen carefully and create a surgical plan tailored to their goals."

As co-founder of the LaVie Institute, Dr. Daniali has created a destination for total body transformation. There, she combines surgical excellence with medical aesthetics, longevity therapies, and luxurious wellness experiences. Patients from across the country come to LaVie for its elevated standard of care—and for Dr. Daniali's deeply human approach.

In addition to her private practice, Dr. Daniali continues to serve vulnerable populations including undocumented, underinsured, and indigent patients. Her international surgical missions to Zimbabwe and Bangladesh reflect a lifelong commitment to helping people around the world heal and thrive.

Dr. Benson Pulikkottil: Precision in Reconstruction, Excellence in Aesthetics

Dr. Benson Pulikkottil is a double board-certified plastic surgeon and the Medical Director of the Burn and Reconstructive Center at Swedish Medical Center, where he leads one of the region's most advanced programs for complex trauma and burn care. Nationally recognized for his surgical expertise, Dr. Pulikkottil brings the highest level of reconstructive skill and aesthetic artistry to his patients at both Swedish and the LaVie Institute, where he specializes in full-body aesthetic transformation.

With advanced training in reconstructive, aesthetic, and hand surgery, Dr. Pulikkottil is known for delivering elegant, natural-looking results grounded in anatomical precision and surgical excellence. His aesthetic procedures—including breast enhancement, tummy tucks, mommy makeovers, liposuction, eyelid surgery, and men's plastic surgery—are informed by years of experience treating the most challenging reconstructive cases.

Dr. Pulikkottil's career has included groundbreaking work in microsurgery and facial reconstruction. His role in the dramatic rebuild of a man's face after a grizzly bear mauling, featured by National Geographic and Grey's Anatomy, exemplifies the complexity and impact of his reconstructive skill. Today, he brings that same attention to detail and deep understanding of human anatomy to every aesthetic surgery he performs.

After completing a competitive direct-entry medical program, Dr. Pulikkottil trained at Rutgers, the University of Pittsburgh, and the #1 plastic surgery program in the country, UT Southwestern. He further refined his microsurgical expertise with an advanced fellowship in Taiwan, making him one of the few surgeons with this level of global and technical experience.

At the LaVie Institute, Dr. Pulikkottil offers highly individualized body contouring and aesthetic surgery designed to help patients reclaim confidence and live fully in their bodies. His grounded, approachable demeanor puts patients at ease, while his results consistently exceed expectations.

Whether performing a complex reconstructive case or a highly customized body transformation, Dr. Pulikkottil combines compassion, skill, and innovation to help patients look and feel their best.

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PEDIATRIC ENDOCRINOLOGY

ROCKY MOUNTAIN PEDIATRIC ENDOCRINOLOGY

ARISTIDES K. MANIATIS, MD

10 5280 Top Doctor 2025

Member of the American Academy of Pediatrics, Endocrine Society, Pediatric Endocrine Society, European Society for Paediatric Endocrinology

Dr. Aristides K. Maniatis is honored to have been selected as a Top Doc for the 10th consecutive year (2016-2025). He founded RMPE in 2013 and leads an outstanding team including his long-standing certified pediatric nurse practitioner, Mako Sather.

Dr. Maniatis is a Denver native who graduated from the University of Colorado with a double major in molecular biology and biochemistry. He attended Harvard Medical School and completed his pediatrics residency and pediatric endocrinology fellowship at Children's Hospital Colorado. Dr. Maniatis is double-board certified in both pediatrics and pediatric endocrinology. Mako Sather completed her post-master's program at the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center (UCHSC).

Dr. Maniatis is an Associate Clinical Professor at UCHSC teaching physician assistant students. He is on faculty with the non-profit organization Medical Education Resources and gives national lectures to primary care physicians. He is the keynote speaker (2018-2025) for the MAGIC foundation, a non-profit patient advocacy group for children with growth disorders.

Dr. Maniatis is a key opinion leader on growth disorders and lectures extensively both nationally and internationally. He has several publications to his credit including lead author of the recent international consensus statement on long-acting growth hormone therapy (https://doi.org/10.1210/clinem/dgae834).

RMPE is a leading clinical research site for multiple phase 3 and phase 4 trials in long-acting growth hormone and a phase 4 trial in hypophosphatasia bone disease.

In conjunction with the Colorado Department of Public Health since 2016, RMPE provides the initial consultation for all babies in Colorado with an abnormal newborn screen for congenital hypothyroidism.

RMPE sees inpatients at Rocky Mountain Hospital for Children. RMPE offers Saturday hours, and the following languages are spoken fluently: Spanish, German, Japanese, and Greek.

Rocky Mountain Pediatric Endocrinology

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- 14x Castle Connolly Top Doctor
- U.S. News and World Report Top Doctor
- Healio Honors Top Doctor
- Patient's Choice Award
- Most Compassionate Doctor Award

SPECIALIZES IN:
- Laser resurfacing wrinkles
- Laser treatment of pigment
- Laser treatment of redness
- Laser treatment of sun damage
- Laser and radiofrequency treatment of acne scars
- Aesthetic injectables (fillers and Botox/Dysport)
- Aesthetic industry clinical trials

ACADEMICS:
- Author of 3 academic hardcover textbooks, including lead author of one of the largest textbooks on Botox
- Published 318+ scientific articles/ book chapters
- Lectured at more than 20 academic aesthetic meetings each year (since 2007)
- Past fellowship director, ASDS Aesthetic Dermatology
- Instructor, ASDS Preceptorship Program
- Instructor, ASLMS Preceptorship Program
- Associate Clinical Professor, University of California, Irvine Department of Dermatology
- Editor of 9 journals, including: Journal of Dermatologic Surgery and Journal Cosmetic Dermatology
- Case report editor, Journal of Drugs in Dermatology
- Member, ASLMS Safety Awareness Committe, and Nominating Commitee
- Video editor host, *Modern Aesthetics Magazine* and *Practical Dermatology Magazine*
- Member, Global Safety Task Force Laser Resurfacing Consensus
- Director, Global Safety Task Force Filler & Botulinum Agents
- Investigator in over 100 clinical trials, including lasers, fillers, and botulinum agents

AWARDS:
- American Society of Dermatologic Surgery (ASDS) Public Service Award
- ASDS Excellence in Education Award
- ASDS International Mentorship Award
- ASDS Patient Safety Hero Award
- ASCDAS Distinguished Service Award
- Melanoma Research Foundation, Humanitarian of the Year Award
- University of California, Irvine, Faculty Teacher of the Year Award

DERMATOLOGY

ABOUTSKIN DERMATOLOGY

JOEL L. COHEN, MD, FAAD, FACMS

11 5280 Top Doctor 2025

M.D. Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, New York

Board-Certified: American Board of Dermatology

Fellowship-trained: Lasers • Aesthetics • Dermatologic Surgery

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ORTHOPEDIC SURGERY

DANIEL POSSLEY, DO, MS

3 5280 Top Doctor 2025

D.O. from Midwestern University's Chicago College of Osteopathic Medicine

Dr. Possley was born and raised in suburban Chicago and received a bachelor's degree from Indiana University. He earned a master's degree in Physiology from Benedictine University. He attended medical school at Midwestern University's Chicago College of Osteopathic Medicine where he received a Doctor of Osteopathy.

He pursued a career in spine surgery after his brother had a serious neck injury that nearly left him paralyzed. His brother is now a thriving electrician, and Dr. Possley knows the value of good surgical care. However, he also appreciates the value of conservative care.

Dr. Possley felt called to serve after the events of 9/11 and joined the United States Army as an orthopedic surgeon. His wartime experience pushed him to continue his training, and he completed a spine surgery fellowship at William Beaumont Hospital in Royal Oak, Michigan. Dr. Possley is board certified. He is also a member of many prestigious medical societies, including the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons, North American Spine Society, Orthopaedic Trauma Association, and Society of Military Orthopaedic Surgeons.

He now lives in Louisville, Colorado, with his wife, a fellow physician and Colorado native, and their three children. In his free time, he loves to spend time outdoors fly fishing, mountain biking, and camping.

"I strive to get you back to your life with non-operative treatments first. My goal is to help you return to doing the things you love so that you can live the life you deserve."

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INTERNAL MEDICINE

BOONE HEART INSTITUTE

JEFFREY L. BOONE, M.D.

3 5280 Top Doctor 2025

M.D. University of Iowa Roy J. and Lucille A. Carver College of Medicine; Diplomat of the American Board of Internal Medicine; Member of the NFL Cardiovascular Committee from 2010-2013; Preventive Cardiology Consultant for the Denver Broncos of the National Football League

YAZID FADL, MD, MPH, FACC
JAMALUDDIN MOLOO, MD, MPH, FSCCT
BARRY MOLK, MD, FACC
SHERI FOX, PA-C, MMSC, IFMCP
SHANNON TANKERSLEY, PA-C
KARLIE BOONE, PA-C

Founded in 2008, the Boone Heart Institute is driven by a steadfast commitment: eradicating heart disease and stroke within a generation. For over fifteen years, we have led the charge in preventive cardiology, guided by the pioneering spirit of our founder, Dr. Jeffrey Boone. His three-decade journey in preventive medicine, coupled with international lecturing, has shaped our institute into a national leader.

Did you know 70 percent of heart attack victims are considered 'low-risk' by conventional standards? At Boone Heart Institute, we aim to rewrite this statistic. Through advanced testing, early detection methods, and innovative treatments, we transform potential risks into tales of success. Whether you carry a family history of heart disease, have experienced a heart attack, or seek reassurance about your cardiovascular future, Boone Heart stands ready as your ally.

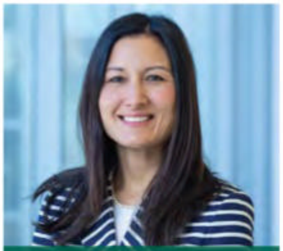
The Boone Heart Executive Physical is a cornerstone of our approach, combining ground-breaking genetic blood tests, advanced full-body imaging, and thorough mental and physical stress assessments. This holistic evaluation identifies your unique cardiovascular risk profile and crafts a personalized plan to optimize your heart health. But our commitment to your health extends beyond the heart. Our growing team of experts in CT imaging, hormone optimization, and high-performance longevity ensure that we stay at the forefront of disease prevention.

At Boone Heart, our physicians take the time to know you, understand your health goals, and empower you to take control of your well-being. To learn more about our Executive Physical or to schedule a free consultation, please visit our website or give us a call.

BOONE HEART INSTITUTE

7355 E. Orchard Road, Suite 100
Greenwood Village, CO 80111
303.762.0710
WWW.BOONEHEART.COM

MONA ABAZA, MD
③ 5280 Top Doctor 2025
Otolaryngology


YURI AGRAWAL, MD
① 5280 Top Doctor 2025
Otolaryngology

GREGORY ALLEN, MD
⑤ 5280 Top Doctor 2025
Complex Pediatric Otolaryngology

JOHN CAMPANA, MD
㉑ 5280 Top Doctor 2025
Otolaryngology

TODD KINGDOM, MD
⑰ 5280 Top Doctor 2025
Otolaryngology

CHRISTOPHER OLIVER, MD
① 5280 Top Doctor 2025
Otolaryngology

SOHAM ROY, MD
③ 5280 Top Doctor 2025
Complex Pediatric Otolaryngology

ADAM TERELLA, MD
③ 5280 Top Doctor 2025
Otolaryngology

TAMMY WANG, MD
③ 5280 Top Doctor 2025
Complex Pediatric Otolaryngology

PATRICIA YOON, MD
③ 5280 Top Doctor 2025
Complex Pediatric Otolaryngology

OUR TEAM IS GROWING! INTRODUCING OUR NEW PHYSICIANS:

MARIA ESPINOSA, MD
Rhinology

IOAN LINA, MD
Laryngology

REBECCA PAQUIN, MD
Pediatric Otolaryngology

We have a strong legacy of excellence dating back over 100 years, and are also relentlessly oriented to the future. We are proud to have 10 of our exceptional physicians recognized as this year's 5280 Top Doctors. Our team is committed to delivering cutting edge clinical care of the highest quality for all conditions of the ear, nose, throat and head and neck cancer. We offer the latest in treatment for conditions across the spectrum of Otolaryngology, with nationally-recognized strength in all of our programs, including Head and Neck Cancer, Pediatric Otolaryngology, Cochlear Implants, Skull Base Surgery, Facial Plastics, Sleep Medicine and Surgery, Sinus and Allergy, and Voice, Airway and Swallowing. Our clinical services extend throughout the front range of Colorado, and we strive to provide our patients with access to our specialized, unparalleled care in communities across the region.

SERVICES

- Cochlear Implants
- Cosmetic & Reconstructive Surgery
- Head & Neck Cancer Surgery
- Pediatric Otolaryngology
- Sinus Surgery
- Skull Base Surgery
- Sleep Surgery
- Voice, Airway, & Swallowing Surgery
- New Services Coming Soon: Laser & Hair Restoration

OTOLARYNGOLOGY

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO ANSCHUTZ MEDICAL CAMPUS

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Department of Otolaryngology
Head & Neck Surgery
UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO **ANSCHUTZ MEDICAL CAMPUS**

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Pediatric ENT Appointments: 720.777.8501
WWW.CUMEDICINE.US/SPECIALTIES/OTOLARYNGOLOGY-HEAD-NECK-SURGERY

Pictured from left: Dr. Gil Weintraub, Dr. Annelise Dawson, Dr. Mariah Brown, Dr. Elizabeth Wallace

Cherry Hills Dermatology is proud to be the Denver-area leader in medical, cosmetic, and surgical dermatology and is honored to announce that all four of our Board-Certified Dermatologists have been named 5280 Top Doctors.

Dr. Annelise Dawson, founder of Cherry Hills Dermatology, trained at Harvard and the University of California San Francisco. She built the practice to provide expert dermatologic care in a warm, patient-focused environment. Dr. Dawson is known equally for her precision in medical dermatology and for her artistry in cosmetic treatments, including Botox, fillers, and lasers.

Dr. Mariah Brown, a Stanford- and Yale-trained Mohs and dermatologic surgeon, previously led the Dermatologic Surgery program at the University of Colorado. She is internationally recognized for her expertise in Mohs surgery and advanced reconstruction.

Dr. Elizabeth Wallace is a Harvard-trained dermatologist and former University of Colorado faculty member. She has deep expertise in autoimmune and rheumatologic skin disease and is known for her compassionate, evidence-based care.

Dr. Gil Weintraub, also Harvard-trained and a former faculty member at the University of Colorado, combines exceptional clinical skill with a kind and personalized approach to patient care. He specializes in complex medical dermatology, including inflammatory and chronic skin conditions.

Cherry Hills Dermatology offers comprehensive care across the full spectrum of dermatologic services, including skin cancer screenings, treatment of complex skin conditions, physician-performed cosmetic procedures, and advanced dermatologic surgery.

Cherry Hills Dermatology welcomes new patients. To schedule an appointment, please visit www.cherryhillsderm.com or call (303) 390-0795.

DERMATOLOGY

CHERRY HILLS DERMATOLOGY

ANNELISE DAWSON, MD

③ 5280 Top Doctor 2025

MARIAH BROWN, MD

② 5280 Top Doctor 2025

ELIZABETH WALLACE, MD

① 5280 Top Doctor 2025

GIL WEINTRAUB, MD

① 5280 Top Doctor 2025

CHERRY HILLS DERMATOLOGY

499 E. Hampden Avenue, Suite 390
Englewood, CO 80113
303.390.0795
WWW.CHERRYHILLSDERM.COM

McCRACKEN
EYE AND FACE

OPHTHALMOLOGY

McCRACKEN EYE & FACE INSTITUTE

MICHAEL McCRACKEN, MD, FACS

② 5280 Top Doctor 2025

They say the eyes are the window to the soul—and it's true. The eyes are the natural focal point of the face, drawing attention and shaping first impressions. When we meet someone, we instinctively look them in the eye. However, because eyelid skin is the thinnest on the body, it's often the first place to reveal signs of aging.

While countless creams, supplements, and injections promise to turn back the clock, their results are often limited. Fortunately, eyelid surgery offers a powerful, lasting solution with minimal downtime. When performed by an expert, eyelid surgery can subtly rejuvenate the entire face—so natural, it's virtually undetectable.

In Colorado, Dr. McCracken stands apart. He is the state's only member of the prestigious American Society of Ophthalmic Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery (ASOPRS) who focuses exclusively on cosmetic eyelid surgery. With over two decades of experience, Dr. McCracken is known not just for his surgical skill, but for his thoughtful, personalized approach. He takes the time to understand each patient's unique goals, delivering results that refresh and restore a youthful, confident appearance. Dr. McCracken is also honored to be recognized as a 5280 Top Doctor and a Castle Connolly Top Doctor, distinctions that reflect his commitment to excellence and patient care.

McCRACKEN
EYE AND FACE

10465 Park Meadows Drive, Suite 105
Lone Tree, CO 80124
720.851.6600
WWW.MCCRACKENMD.COM

DERMATOLOGY

DERMATOLOGY SPECIALISTS

ANASTASIA BENOIT, MD

② 5280 Top Doctor 2025

Dr. Anastasia Benoit is a fellowship-trained, double board-certified dermatologic surgeon specializing in Mohs micrographic surgery, aesthetic reconstruction, and facial rejuvenation. She is nationally recognized as an expert in skin cancer treatment, reconstruction, and aesthetic dermatology. Dr. Benoit brings precision, artistry, and compassion to the treatment of skin cancer, particularly in areas where both function and appearance matter most. With expertise in non-surgical aesthetic treatments and cosmetic surgery, including Dysport®, dermal fillers, blepharoplasty (eyelid surgery), and rhytidectomy (facelift), she offers patients trusted care and natural-looking results—whether restoring health or enhancing beauty.

11990 Grant Street, Suite 300
Northglenn, CO 80233
303.442.6647 | @abenoit.md
WWW.DSDERM.COM

INTERNAL MEDICINE

PARADIGM DIRECT HEALTH

MICHAEL BENOIT, MD

① 5280 Top Doctor 2025

As the founder of Paradigm Direct Health, Dr. Michael Benoit practices a modern approach to medicine rooted in timeless values: access, trust, and continuity. His concierge primary care model gives patients unparalleled direct phone access and the exclusivity that comes from maintaining a smaller patient panel. By reimagining the healthcare experience, Dr. Benoit delivers a more effective, patient-centric model that proactively empowers individuals to take control and optimize their health. This approach reflects a deep belief that healthcare should be about more than just treating disease—it should be about helping people live their healthiest, fullest lives.

1120 W South Boulder Road, Suite 102-I
Lafayette, CO 80026
720.743.5672 | @paradigmdirecthealth
WWW.PARADIGMDIRECTHEALTH.COM

Partners in Women's Health works on a collaborative approach to women's healthcare, focusing on personalized, patient-centered care. We believe in partnering with our patients to support their overall health and well-being, providing a team-based approach to prevention, treatment, and education throughout every stage of life.

Dr. Maeve Felle holds a medical degree from the University of Texas Health Science Center in San Antonio and completed her residency at the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus. She took a non-traditional path to medicine after conducting research at the University of Texas-Southwestern. Maeve pursued obstetrics and gynecology as a field of practice that would enable her to establish long-term relationships with her patients. Her care for patients was influenced by the compassion she saw her mother receive while battling breast cancer.

Dr. Felle is the proud co-owner of one of few independently female-owned OB-GYN practices in the front range. At Partners in Women's Health, she and her fellow providers bring a comprehensive approach to meeting the obstetric, gynecological, family planning, fertility, and menopausal needs of their patients. Maeve is most proud of starting and raising a family while in medical school and residency - helping her approach her patients' individual circumstances and work-life balance. Having now been in private practice for thirteen years, she continues to fulfill her goal of being a strong advocate for her patients and women's health.

OBSTETRICS & GYNECOLOGY

PARTNERS IN WOMEN'S HEALTH

MAEVE FELLE, MD, AFOG

① 5280 Top Doctor 2025

University of Texas Health Science Center, MD; University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus, Residency in Obstetrics & Gynecology

PARTNERS
IN WOMEN'S HEALTH
empowering women

4500 E. 9th Avenue, Suite 700
Denver, CO 80220
303.399.3315
WWW.PIWHDENVER.COM

MATTHEW MAHLBERG, MD
③ 5280 Top Doctor 2025

MAURA CAUFIELD SMITH, MD

LESLIE STEWART, MD
② 5280 Top Doctor 2025

ANNIE WESTER JONES, MD

SCOTT MAHLBERG, MD

JOSHUA SCHIMMEL, MD

JENNY BINNING PA-C

BRIAN WEINSTEIN, PA-C

Founded in 2016 by 5280 Top Doctor Dr. Matt Mahlberg, Colorado Center for Dermatology & Skin Surgery (CCD) has cultivated an expert team of physicians and medical providers. The physician-led practice is consistently recognized as a leader in comprehensive dermatologic care – offering advanced expertise in skin cancer treatment and Mohs micrographic surgery, medical dermatology, and cosmetic dermatology. With patients at the heart of its mission, CCD strives to deliver the gift of personalized healing and expert care to every patient.

Dr. Matt Mahlberg is passionate about all areas of skin health and especially developing comprehensive treatment plans to treat and prevent skin cancer. As a sought-after expert in Mohs surgery and laser surgery, he enjoys working with each surgical patient to ensure that both cure and aesthetic outcomes are optimized.

As medical director of CCD, Dr. Mahlberg is honored to serve alongside an incredibly talented and skilled provider team trained at prestigious institutions throughout the country, including, the University of Pennsylvania, NYU, Georgetown, Vanderbilt, Case Western, the University of Colorado, and Yale.

Dr. Leslie Stewart, also a 5280 Top Doctor, is regarded as one of the foremost experts on allergic contact dermatitis and complex medical dermatology. Dr. Maura Caufield Smith, Dr. Annie Wester Jones and the rest of the medical team provide cutting-edge, evidence-based and patient-focused dermatology care for the breadth of medical and cosmetic dermatology concerns.

CCD continues to expand its offerings to serve the community. Dr. Scott Mahlberg joined CCD in 2024, bringing exceptional skills in skin cancer and reconstructive surgery from his fellowship training. In 2025, CCD opened a new, state-of-the-art office in the Denver Tech Center and is excited to welcome a new physician, Dr. Josh Schimmel, to the practice in the Fall.

CCD welcomes new and returning patients. Please visit coloradodermatology.com or call (303) 761-0906 to schedule an appointment.

DERMATOLOGY

COLORADO CENTER FOR DERMATOLOGY & SKIN SURGERY

MATTHEW MAHLBERG, MD
③ 5280 Top Doctor 2025
MAURA CAUFIELD SMITH, MD
LESLIE STEWART, MD
② 5280 Top Doctor 2025
ANNIE WESTER JONES, MD
SCOTT MAHLBERG, MD
JOSHUA SCHIMMEL, MD
JENNY BINNING, PA-C
BRIAN WEINSTEIN, PA-C

COLORADO CENTER for
DERMATOLOGY
& SKIN SURGERY

Centennial | Littleton | Longmont
303.761.0906
WWW.COLORADODERMATOLOGY.COM

PLASTIC SURGERY

EMMETT PLASTIC SURGERY

JENNIFER EMMETT, MD

③ **5280 Top Doctor 2025**

Board Certified, American Board of Plastic Surgery & American Board of Surgery; General Surgery Residency, University of Colorado; Plastic Surgery Training, Albert Einstein College of Medicine, New York; Fellowship for Advanced Surgical Techniques, Rose Medical Hospital, Colorado

Jennifer Emmett, M.D. is a double board-certified plastic surgeon with over 20 years of experience in the field. Dr. Emmett has dedicated 17 years to plastic surgery and 7 years to general surgery, **making her one of the region's most qualified and skilled surgeons. She specializes in breast augmentation, lifts, replacement and removal as well as all face and neck cosmetic surgery**, putting her vast knowledge and expertise to work to achieve optimal results.

Dr. Emmett's practice offers wellness and med spa treatments through Circle Aesthetics, including laser facials, non-surgical skin tightening, hair restoration, injectable fillers and wrinkle reduction. The licensed medical team specializes in hormone imbalance therapy and medically supervised weight loss, including critical labs and follow-up care, to ensure successful and healthy weight reduction. **What sets Dr. Emmett apart from other plastic surgeons is her extensive training in aesthetic surgery.** After completing her 5-year general surgery residency, Dr. Emmett pursued a career in breast cancer surgery for many years. She then attended the prestigious Albert Einstein College of Medicine for specialized cosmetic training where Dr. Emmett received her board certification in plastic surgery. After being chosen from surgeons across the nation, Dr. Emmett accepted an elite fellowship to receive 12 more months of aesthetic surgical training. In addition, for over 16 years Dr Emmett's Anesthesiologists have used **IV sedation with no intubation**—a safer alternative. Now in her third year as a *5280* Top Doctor and her twelfth as a Top Doctor by the peer review group Castle Connolly, as a devoted physician, Dr. Emmett prioritizes the all-around healthcare of her patients. **Experience the difference that comes with having a skilled and compassionate surgeon like Dr. Emmett on your side.**

Emmett PLASTIC SURGERY

CIRCLE AESTHETICS

9362 Teddy Lane, Suite 103 & 104
Lone Tree, CO 80124
303.955.7545
WWW.DENVERFACEANDBODY.COM | WWW.CIRCLEAESTHTICS.COM

RADIATION ONCOLOGY

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO HEALTH RADIATION ONCOLOGY

RACHEL RABINOVITCH, MD

10 5280 Top Doctor 2025

BRIAN KAVANAGH, MD

5 5280 Top Doctor 2025

Drs. Rachel Rabinovitch and Brian Kavanagh of the University of Colorado School of Medicine Department of Radiation Oncology have been honored multiple times as 5280 Top Docs.

Along with a team of physicians and medical physicists in their department, they provide state-of-the-art care to adults and children suffering from cancers of all types as well as patients suffering from certain debilitating non-cancerous illnesses. At seven locations throughout the Denver metro region, Southern Colorado, and Southern Wyoming, the department faculty treat over 8,000 patients per year. The department aims to achieve excellence in professionalism and compassionate patient care in a climate that fosters innovation and allows patients access to the newest cutting edge treatments.

One of the newest team members is Dr. Michelle Ludwig, who will serve as Clinical Director of Women's Cancer Services. Dr. Ludwig earned an MD at Emory University and then completed a residency in Radiation Oncology at MD Anderson Cancer Center. She has served on the faculty of the Baylor College of Medicine and also presently is a member of the National Board of Canine Companions, a leader in medical service dog training.

Another newcomer is Dr. John Schallenkamp, a CU Boulder alumnus who graduated from the Medical College of Wisconsin prior to his residency in Radiation Oncology at the Mayo Clinic. He later earned an MBA at the University of Utah and a Master of Healthcare Quality and Safety from Harvard. Dr. Schallenkamp will serve as Medical Director of the Radiation Oncology Clinic at the Cheyenne Regional Medical Center.

Department of Radiation Oncology
SCHOOL OF MEDICINE
UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO **ANSCHUTZ MEDICAL CAMPUS**

Anschutz Medical Campus
1665 Aurora Court, Aurora, CO 80045 | 720.848.0100

Highlands Ranch Hospital
1500 Park Central Drive, Highlands Ranch, CO 80129 | 720.516.0150

Longs Peak Medical Center
1750 E. Ken Pratt Boulevard, Longmont, CO 80504 | 720.718.5160

Cherry Creek Medical Center
100 Cook Street, Suite 202, Denver, CO 80206 | 720.516.9218

WWW.MEDSCHOOL.CUANSCHUTZ.EDU/RADIATION-ONCOLOGY

PLASTIC SURGERY

ATAGI PLASTIC SURGERY & SKIN AESTHETICS

TANYA A. ATAGI, MD

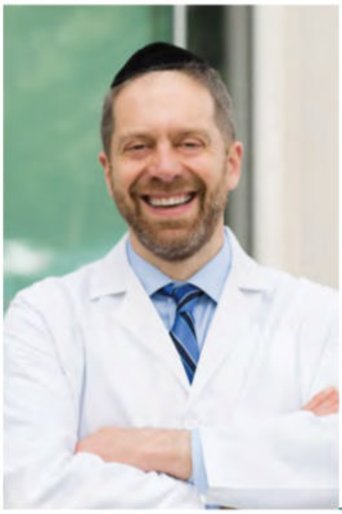
10 5280 Top Doctor 2025

Dr. Tanya Atagi's professional path began as a Product Design Engineer and Art Design major followed by her M.D. at Stanford University. Her compassionate and holistic approach reflects diverse interests, expertise, and commitment to comprehensive care. Although Atagi Plastic Surgery & Skin Aesthetics creates external transformation—personalized health, emotional well-being, self-optimization, and authentic beauty is actualized through whole body health.

To meet this rapidly growing, yet unmet demand for fundamental preventive care, Dr. Atagi founded BeSANA Health & Wellness creating a unique opportunity to partner with and support patients through nutrition, system-based lab analysis, stress reduction, weight management, and hormone balancing. Together, Atagi Aesthetics and BeSANA deliver a one-stop destination for beauty, health, and change.

Atagi Plastic Surgery and
Atagi Skin Aesthetics

10099 Ridgegate Parkway, Suite 430
Lone Tree, CO 80124
303.327.7300 | **WWW.ATAGIMD.COM**



REPRODUCTIVE ENDOCRINOLOGY & INFERTILITY

SHADY GROVE FERTILITY

CASSANDRA ROECA, MD

2 5280 Top Doctor 2025

ALEX POLOTSKY, MD

2 5280 Top Doctor 2025

DR. CASSANDRA ROECA brings compassionate care and deep expertise in IVF, fertility preservation, and genetic conditions impacting fertility. She's a published leader in the field, with research focused on cancer-related fertility care, menopause, and advanced testing.

DR. ALEX POLOTSKY, Medical Director of SGF Colorado, combines 20+ years of experience with a passion for innovation in reproductive care. He's published 80+ studies on IVF success, male fertility, and the impact of metabolic health on conception.

SGF
shady grove fertility

8200 E Belleview Avenue
Suite 615-E
Greenwood Village, CO 80111
720.704.8221
WWW.SHADYGROVEFERTILITY.COM

Dr. York is an expert in minimally invasive and robotic spine surgery in addition to being an expert in regenerative orthopaedic and spine care. He trained at the #1 ranked Hospital for Special Surgery and now sees patients in his luxury, concierge clinic in Greenwood Village. Prior to founding his current practice, The Orchard Clinic, he started his career in academics at the University of Colorado and later worked in a busy private practice at Panorama Orthopedics, focusing on providing excellent, evidence-based care for his patients.

In 2024, he founded The Orchard Clinic as the culmination of his dedication to cutting edge treatments and an enhanced focus on spending more time with each of his patients. This first of its kind, concierge, orthopaedic spine practice allows patients to schedule at their convenience with extended consultations where they can feel heard and can discuss their treatment goals at length. This allows Dr. York to provide unbiased recommendations as an expert in both surgical and non-surgical care. His attention to detail, 24/7 direct access for his patients and the personalized care that he provides is what sets him apart.

Dr. York's reputation of excellence extends well outside of Colorado. In addition to providing a world-class experience for his patients, Dr. York achieves world-class surgical results. From minimally invasive decompressions, robotic revision surgeries and cervical and lumbar disc replacements, patients have travelled from all over the world to have Dr. York perform their surgery knowing that they will be receiving superior, cutting-edge care.

ORTHOPEDIC SURGERY

THE ORCHARD CLINIC

PHILIP J. YORK, MD

② 5280 Top Doctor 2025

Medical School: University of Oklahoma – High Honors
Residency in Orthopaedic Surgery: University of Colorado
Spine Fellowship: Hospital for Special Surgery

Previous Top Doc Winner, Numerous Research and Education Awards, Member of the Society for Minimally Invasive Spine Surgery

THE ORCHARD CLINIC

5958 S. Holly Street
Greenwood Village, CO 80111
303.214.1055
WWW.ORCHARDSPINE.COM

CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE

AURORA DENVER CARDIOLOGY ASSOCIATES

ARUN KAHLON, MD

1 5280 Top Doctor 2025

Interventional Training at Beaumont Health, Royal Oak, Michigan

Dr. Kahlon is an interventional cardiologist known for a passion for delivering comprehensive, patient-centered care. Specializing in complex coronary interventions for patients who have exhausted other options, Dr. Kahlon also practices preventative cardiology, managing conditions such as high cholesterol, high blood pressure, arrhythmias, and diabetes. With a philosophy rooted in highly personalized care, Dr. Kahlon combines the latest evidence-based guidelines with cutting-edge advances in cardiology. Patient relationships are at the heart of the practice—each individual is treated like family, and the clinic prioritizes accessibility, offering no wait times for urgent concerns.

10103 Ridgegate Parkway, Suite 103, Lone Tree, CO, 80124
303.645.0090 | **WWW.ADCACARDIOLOGY.COM**

PLASTIC SURGERY

CU MEDICINE COSMETIC SURGERY

BROOKE FRENCH, MD

6 5280 Top Doctor 2025

CHRIS KAOUTZANIS, MD

1 5280 Top Doctor 2025

DAVID MATHES, MD

1 5280 Top Doctor 2025

Our highly trained and experienced board-certified plastic surgeons are leaders in the field, providing personalized care and cutting-edge surgical techniques to achieve natural-looking results. Our surgeons specialize in aesthetic surgeries for the face, body and breasts. Our clinic also offers minimally invasive aesthetic services:

- Injectables
- Laser Treatments
- Peels
- Neuromodulators
- Microneedling
- Scar Revision
- Earlobe Repair
- Fillers
- Facials

We look forward to meeting you and providing you with the best cosmetic and aesthetic care in the Denver area!

Cosmetic Surgery
UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO **MEDICINE**

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Aurora, CO 80045
303.724.8700
cuplasticsurgery@cuanschutz.edu
WWW.CUCOSMETICSURGERY.COM

DERMATOLOGY

DERMATOLOGY SPECIALISTS

SHAWN ALLEN, MD ③ 5280 Top Doctor 2025

CAROL ALONSO, MD ② 5280 Top Doctor 2025

ANASTASIA BENOIT, MD ② 5280 Top Doctor 2025

At Dermatology Specialists, we deliver excellence in skin care with compassion, purpose, and consciousness. With 5 offices, 11 board-certified dermatologists, 2 board-certified PAs, and board-certified specialists in Mohs surgery, pediatric dermatology, and dermatopathology, we're here to serve every age and skin concern.

From acne to skin cancer and cosmetic care, our top doctors bring expertise and heart to everything we do.

Experience the Dermatology Specialists difference. Your skin deserves the best.

DERMATOLOGY SPECIALISTS
SURGICAL · MEDICAL · COSMETIC

Boulder | Brighton | Louisville | Loveland
NEW LOCATION: Northglenn
303.442.6647 | **WWW.DSDERM.COM**

PULMONARY DISEASE

BOULDER VALLEY PULMONOLOGY

S. CLARK BERNGARD, MD

① 5280 Top Doctor 2025

Undergrad, University of Colorado at Boulder; Doctorate, University of Colorado School of Medicine; Residency, University of Colorado School of Medicine; Fellowship, University of California, San Diego

Dr. Berngard practices pulmonary, critical care and sleep medicine at Boulder Community Health where he also serves as Medical ICU Director and Section Chief of Pulmonary and Critical Care Medicine. He completed his fellowship in pulmonary, critical care, and sleep medicine at the University of California, San Diego. He is known for his clinical excellence, compassionate care, and expertise in diagnosing and treating complex pulmonary conditions. In addition to standard pulmonary and critical care procedures, Dr. Berngard performs advanced procedures such as right heart catheterization, endobronchial ultrasound (EBUS), and percutaneous tracheostomy. Since joining the practice in 2018, he has built a strong reputation for delivering evidence-based, high-quality, patient-centered care.

Boulder Community Health

4820 Riverbend Road, Suite 100 Boulder, CO 80301
303.415.5399 | **WWW.BCH.ORG**

OPHTHALMOLOGY

ROBERT FISH, MD

① 5280 Top Doctor 2025

Dr. Robert Fish is a board-certified ophthalmologist, corneal specialist, and a partner at Colorado Eye Consultants. He has extensive experience with both routine and complex cataract surgery and offers the latest techniques in corneal transplantation. Dedicated to advancing eye care, Dr. Fish has served in multiple leadership roles with the Colorado Society of Eye Physicians and Surgeons. He's also nationally recognized for his expertise in corneal health.

COLORADO EYE CONSULTANTS

1501 W. Mineral Avenue, Suite 100
Littleton, CO 80120
303.730.0404
WWW.COLORADOEYECONSULTANTS.COM

OPHTHALMOLOGY

LANCE FORSTOT, MD

③ 5280 Top Doctor 2025

Dr. Forstot is a board-certified ophthalmologist, corneal specialist, and a founding partner of Colorado Eye Consultants. Throughout his career, he has remained committed to providing the most advanced surgical and non-surgical care for conditions affecting the cornea and external eye. Widely recognized by his peers as an expert in corneal care, Dr. Forstot is a nationally respected leader in the field. For more than 35 years, he has also proudly served veterans as a faculty member at the Veterans Administration Medical Center in Denver.

COLORADO EYE CONSULTANTS

1501 W. Mineral Avenue, Suite 100
Littleton, CO 80120 | 303.730.0404
WWW.COLORADOEYECONSULTANTS.COM

PLASTIC SURGERY (WITHIN THE HEAD AND NECK)

DAVID J. ARCHIBALD MD

③ 5280 Top Doctor 2025

Dr. Archibald is a Mayo Clinic-trained double-board certified facial plastic surgeon. He is well-known in Denver as the leader in deep-plane vertical restoring facelift procedures. He offers personalized treatments that have made him the destination for patients looking to achieve elegant natural results. He strives to help his patients feel more self-confident than ever before, resonating the meaning of true beauty.

2352 Meadows Boulevard, Suite 170
Castle Rock, CO 80109 | 303.268.2222
WWW.CASTLEROCKSURGERY.COM

OPHTHALMOLOGY

FANTE EYE AND FACE CENTRE

ROBERT FANTE, MD, FACS

③ 5280 Top Doctor 2025

ALEXANDRA LEVITT, MD, MPH

As the preeminent oculofacial plastic surgery practice for over 20 years, the surgeons of the Fante Eye and Face Centre bring a meticulous, artistic approach to both cosmetic and reconstructive eyelid and facial surgery. Dr. Levitt and Dr. Fante are compassionate, board-certified specialists with extensive experience. They take the time to truly understand each patient's goals and are deeply committed to education, innovation, and solving complex challenges. Whether you're seeking subtle rejuvenation, better health, or a more significant transformation, our goal is to help you look refreshed, revitalized, and to be the very best version of yourself. Call us to schedule a personalized consultation and experience the best.

FANTE
EYE & FACE CENTRE
Cosmetic & Oculoplastic Surgery

4500 Cherry Creek Drive S., Suite 550
Denver, CO 80246
303.839.1616
WWW.DRFANTE.COM

PLASTIC SURGERY & SURGERY OF THE HAND

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO PLASTIC SURGERY

BACK (LEFT TO RIGHT): David Khechoyan, MD; Mark Greyson, MD; **Brooke French, MD • 5280 Top Doctor 2025**; Phuong Nguyen, MD; **Kia Washington, MD • 5280 Top Doctor 2025**; Katie Egan, MD

BACK (LEFT TO RIGHT): Jason Yu, MD, DMD; Matt Iorio, MD; **David Mathes, MD • 5280 Top Doctor 2025**; **Chris Kaoutzanis, MD • 5280 Top Doctor 2025**

Our dedicated team of plastic surgeons embrace a multidisciplinary approach to provide comprehensive care for all our surgical patients. We combine our commitment to patient-centered care with our focus on advancing the science and art of plastic and reconstructive surgery.

WE OFFER:

- Breast Reconstruction
- Cosmetic Surgery
- Hand Surgery
- Facial Surgery
- Pediatric Plastic Surgery
- Complex Wound Care
- Breast & Body Surgery

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Board-certified plastic surgeon Paul M. Steinwald, MD, is honored to be renamed a “5280 Top Doc” for the third year in a row. Practicing since 2000, Dr. Steinwald specializes in rhinoplasty, facial rejuvenation, Mommy Makeovers, and chest masculinization at The Center for Cosmetic Surgery, known for excellent results and patient experiences.

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Dr. Neda Rasouli is a dedicated endocrinologist and a nationally and internationally recognized expert in diabetes care and research. As a Professor of Medicine and Pharmacy at the University of Colorado, she provides compassionate, expert care to patients at both the Anschutz Medical Campus and the Rocky Mountain Regional VA Medical Center. Dr. Rasouli is also a leader in advancing treatment options through clinical trials, directing the CU Diabetes and Endocrinology Clinical Trial Program and the VA's Network of Dedicated Enrollment Sites. Her work helps bring the latest therapies to patients and shape national diabetes care.

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③ 5280 Top Doctor 2025

Mark Fitzgerald, MD, is a board-certified physician specializing in sports medicine, with a passion for helping athletes of all levels return to peak performance. Dr. Fitzgerald is at the forefront of developing innovative surgical techniques, including advancements in augmented reality-assisted procedures.

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② 5280 Top Doctor 2025

M.D. at the University of Nebraska Medical Center; Residency at the University of California: Davis Medical Center; Glaucoma fellowship at the Bascom Palmer Eye Institute

Kingsley Okafor, MD is a board-certified ophthalmologist in Denver, Colorado. Dr. Okafor is passionate about innovation and providing the latest technologies to patients–while treating them like people, not numbers. Dr. Okafor performs refractive, cataract, and glaucoma surgeries, and now offers femtosecond laser.

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Tiffany Tello, MD
Dermatology

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② 5280 Top Doctor 2025

Dr. Tello is a double board-certified expert in skin cancer and reconstructive surgery. Dr. Theriault is an accomplished board-certified dermatologist who treats medical and cosmetic skin issues in patients of all ages. Our team offers compassionate, evidence-based care from true leaders in medical, surgical, and cosmetic dermatology.

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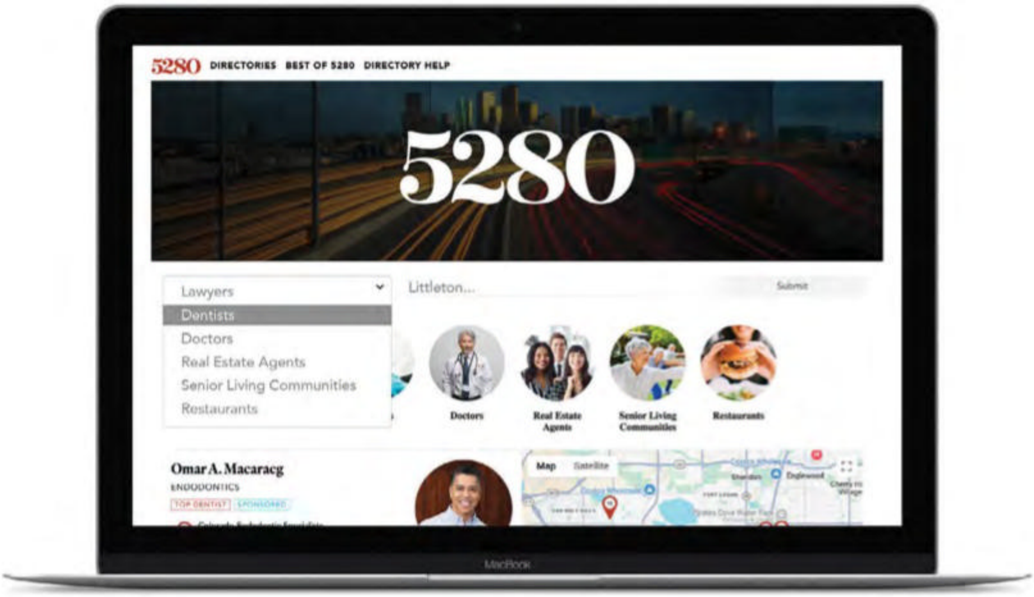
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Dining Guide

PRICE KEY
Average Entrée

$	under $15
$$	$16 to $20
$$$	$21 to $30
$$$$	$31 and higher

SYMBOL KEY

●
Indicates a restaurant featured in *5280* for the first time (though not necessarily a restaurant that has just opened).

★
Indicates inclusion in *5280*'s 2024 list of Denver's best restaurants. These selections are at the discretion of *5280* editors and are subject to change.

★**A5 STEAKHOUSE** $$$$
LoDo / Steak House This rarified chophouse by the team behind Tap & Burger features a range of specialty steaks, eclectic sides with Asian influence, and draft cocktails. Never pass up the beef tartare katsu sando and the chickpea fries to start your meal. Reservations accepted. *1600 15th St., 303-623-0534. Dinner*

ABEJAS $$$$
Golden / Seasonal Enjoy seasonal new American plates at this community restaurant. The ever-changing menu features farm-fresh produce, sustainable fish, and organic meats, and the bar highlights small wineries and local brewers. Reservations accepted. *807 13th St., Golden, 303-952-9745. Dinner, Brunch*

ACE EAT SERVE $$$
Uptown / Asian This Uptown restaurant and ping-pong hall features Asian-inspired cuisine and 10 ping-pong tables. Try the Sichuan shrimp wontons. Reservations accepted. *501 E. 17th Ave., 303-800-7705. Dinner, Brunch*

ACOVA $$$
LoHi / American A diverse menu of American classics and dishes spotlighting international flavors are the draws here. Try the honey-drizzled fried chicken. Reservations accepted. *3651 Navajo St., 303-736-2718. Lunch, Dinner, Brunch*

ACREAGE BY STEM CIDERS $$
Lafayette / Seasonal Stem Ciders' ciderhouse and eatery pairs its drinks with house-grown produce and sustainable sourcing. Save room for the cider doughnuts. Reservations accepted. *1380 Horizon Ave., Lafayette, 720-443-3007. Lunch, Dinner*

AFRICAN GRILL & BAR $$
Lakewood / African Explore Africa at this warm and inviting restaurant run by the Osei-Fordwuo family. Peanut soups, fried fish, samosas, and jollof rice are just some of the deeply flavorful options. Reservations accepted. *955 S. Kipling Parkway, Lakewood, 303-985-4497. Lunch, Dinner*

★**ALMA FONDA FINA** $$$$
LoHi / Mexican This Michelin-starred contemporary Mexican restaurant wows with its creative, shareable plates, which often feature house-made masa and flavor-packed salsas. The camote asado (roasted sweet potato) is an excellent way to start off your meal. Reservations accepted. *2556 15th St., 303-455-9463. Dinner*

ALTEÑO $$$$
Cherry Creek / Mexican This opulent destination from Michelin-starred chef Johnny Curiel of Alma Fonda Fina serves contemporary Mexican fare influenced by the chef's memories of the highlands of Jalisco. Seafood from the region's coastal waters and heartier dishes from higher elevations share menu space. Reservations accepted. *249 Clayton St., 303-532-4999. Dinner*

AMERICAN ELM $$$
Berkeley / American Elevated American fare and classic cocktails anchor the menu at this neighborhood spot. Order the rib-eye French dip or the roasted half chicken. Reservations accepted. *4132 W. 38th Ave., 720-749-3186. Dinner, Brunch*

ANGELO'S TAVERNA $$
Speer / Italian This neighborhood nook dishes up tasty grilled oysters as well as pastas and pizzas. Try the lobster gnocchi. Also try the Littleton location. Reservations not accepted. *620 E. Sixth Ave., 303-744-3366. Lunch, Dinner*

ANNETTE $$$
Aurora / American James Beard Award–winning chef Caroline Glover's Annette delivers a lineup of seasonal salads, pastas, wood-fired proteins, and other comforting bites in a modern, inviting space. Don't skip dessert, particularly if pecan pie is on the menu. Reservations accepted. *2501 Dallas St., Ste. 108, Aurora, 720-710-9975. Dinner*

ASH'KARA $$$
LoHi / Middle Eastern Chef Daniel Asher offers a playful take on Middle Eastern cuisine at this plant-bedecked eatery. Order the falafel and a shareable tagine. Reservations accepted. *2005 W. 33rd Ave., 303-537-4407. Dinner, Brunch*

ATTIMO $$
Ballpark / Italian At this urban winery, Snooze co-founder Jon Schlegel serves vino from artisans in northern Italy with light, thoughtful fare. Reservations accepted. *2246 Larimer St., 720-287-4988. Dinner*

AVANTI FOOD & BEVERAGE $$
LoHi / International Current tenants of Denver's first food hall include Farang Thai Kitchen, Bowls by Ko, Quiero Arepas, Knockabout Burgers, Pizza Bandit, and Eloise. Also try the Boulder and Vail locations. Reservations not accepted. *3200 Pecos St., 720-269-4778. Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*

BACON SOCIAL HOUSE $$
Littleton / Contemporary This fun, casual restaurant's beloved namesake ingredient is at the forefront of many of its dishes. Also try the Sunnyside location. Reservations accepted. *2100 W. Littleton Blvd., Littleton, 720-750-7107. Breakfast, Lunch*

BAMBOO SUSHI $$$
LoHi / Sushi This Portland-born sustainable sushi spot will make you feel good about each bite of sashimi you take. Try the dashi scallop with chive oil. Reservations accepted. *2715 17th St., 303-284-6600. Lunch, Dinner*

★**BAEKGA** $$$
Lowry Field / Korean Chef-owner Sean Baek serves flavorful Korean eats at this quaint Lowry Town Center spot. Don't miss out on the lunch specials, hearty portions of protein and rice that come with plenty of banchan (side dishes). Reservations not accepted. *200 Quebec St., Ste. 115, 720-639-3872. Lunch, Dinner*

BÁNH & BUTTER BAKERY CAFÉ $
Aurora / French Thoa Nguyen crafts French pastries inspired by her Vietnamese heritage at this East Colfax cafe. Go for the bánh mì and dazzling crepe cakes, each made with 25 to 30 layers. Reservations not accepted. *9935 E. Colfax Ave., Aurora, 720-513-9313. Breakfast, Lunch*

BAROLO GRILL $$$$
Cherry Creek / Italian Dedication to ingredients and tradition translates to the food and extensive wine menu at this elegant eatery, which is focused on the cuisines of northern Italy's Tuscany and Piedmont regions. Reservations accepted. *3030 E. Sixth Ave., 303-393-1040. Dinner*

BASTA $$$
Boulder / Italian This wood-fired eatery offers bold flavors and interesting wines. Try the clam pizza. Reservations accepted. *3601 Arapahoe Ave., Boulder, 303-997-8775. Dinner*

BASTIEN'S RESTAURANT $$$$
City Park / Steak House Enjoy hearty, home-style cooking at this local favorite, which has been family-owned for more than 80 years. Come for the signature sugar-rubbed steaks. Reservations accepted. *3503 E. Colfax Ave., 303-322-0363. Dinner*

BB.Q CHICKEN $$
Aurora / Korean Discover finger-licking goodness at BB.Q Chicken, a fast-casual, Korea-born chain serving crunchy-juicy wings. Multiple locations. Reservations not accepted. *2495 S. Havana St., Suite H, Aurora, 720-882-6736. Lunch, Dinner*

BECKON $$$$
RiNo / Contemporary Chef Duncan Holmes brings an elevated, intimate dining experience to Larimer Street. The seasonal menu changes frequently, and excellent, thoughtful wine pairings are available. Reservations accepted. *2843 Larimer St., 303-749-0020. Dinner*

WANT MORE DINING OPTIONS? Visit our online listings at 5280.com/restaurants.

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As a proud board member of the Sloan's Lake Park Foundation, I am honored to present to you the committee's upcoming event: Jamming on the Jetty. Save the date and get ready to experience the community culture with live music, local breweries and tasteful bites from coveted food trucks at this incredible event happening on Saturday, September 20th from 1pm until sundown.

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BIG MAC & LITTLE LU'S $$$
Westminster / Seafood Big Mac & Little Lu's brings Florida beaches to the Centennial State with carefully sourced seafood and thoughtfully paired beverages. Go for one of four po' boy sandwiches. Reservations accepted. *2851 E. 120th Ave., Westminster, 303-404-2722. Lunch, Dinner*

THE BINDERY $$$
LoHi / Contemporary Linda Hampsten Fox's eatery, market, and bakery offers worldly fare inspired by her travels. Settle in for the smoked rabbit pecan pie with mustard gelato. Reservations accepted. *1817 Central St., 303-993-2364. Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner, Brunch*

BLACKBELLY $$$
Boulder / American Chef Hosea Rosenberg's carnivore-friendly menu focuses on charcuterie and daily butcher specials. Also check out the adjacent butcher shop and market, which peddles breakfast, lunch, and locally made retail goods, or the newer Blackbelly Butcher in Denver. Reservations accepted. *1606 Conestoga St., Boulder, 303-247-1000. Dinner*

BLACK CAT FARMSTEAD $$$$
Longmont / American Chef Eric Skokan re-invented his Boulder-based Black Cat Bistro by moving the entire operation to a farm 12 miles north of town. Diners enjoy foothills views in private cabanas that seat up to 12. Dinner is a set, multicourse meal based on seasonally available vegetables, grains, legumes, and farm-raised meats. Reservations required. *9889 N. 51st St., Longmont, 303-444-5500. Dinner*

BLUE PAN PIZZA $$
West Highland / Pizza Masterfully crafted Detroit-style pizza is the draw at this tiny spot. Try the Brooklyn Bridge, topped with pepperoni, Italian sausage, and ricotta and Romano cheeses. Also try the Congress Park location. Reservations not accepted. *3930 W. 32nd Ave., 720-456-7666. Lunch, Dinner*

BRASSERIE BRIXTON $$$$
Cole / French Pair the likes of steak frites, pâté with house-baked sourdough, and other comforting French specialties with a glass of wine (there's even some on tap) at this always-packed neighborhood bistro. But also be prepared for culinary creations that stray from the French canon. Reservations accepted. *3701 N. Williams St., 720-617-7911. Dinner*

THE BRONZE EMPIRE $$$
Cory-Merrill / Chinese This comfortable restaurant specializes in Chinese hot pot, which features an aromatic, bubbling broth for cooking fresh ingredients right at your table. Dip everything from noodles to steak into the savory cooking liquid. Reservations accepted. *1591 S. Colorado Blvd., 720-599-8888. Lunch, Dinner*

BRUTØ $$$$
Downtown / International At the Wolf's Tailor's sister restaurant at the Dairy Block, executive chef Byron Gomez highlights heritage grains and house ferments in an omakase-style tasting menu. Tack on the cocktail pairing to make the experience even more special. Reservations accepted. *1801 Blake St., 720-325-2195. Dinner*

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C BURGER $
Boulder / American This fast-casual kitchen is the first in Colorado to source 100 percent of its beef from local regenerative farms. Try the classic double cheeseburger with a side of seasoned fries. Also try the Englewood location. Reservations not accepted. *921 Pearl Street, Boulder, 720-432-5205. Lunch, Dinner*

CABRÓN CARBÓN TAQUERIA & GALERÍA $
Golden Triangle / Mexican Try quesabirria, aguas frescas, and papa asadas (loaded baked potatoes) in this neon-laced taqueria and art gallery. Reservations not accepted. *1043 N. Broadway, 720-598-6934. Lunch, Dinner*

CAFE AION $$$
Boulder / Spanish This tucked-away bistro is styled after a European tapas bar. Enjoy a menu of small plates filled with local, seasonal ingredients. Try the season's latest house-cured chorizo or one of four paella preparations built for sharing. Reservations accepted. *1235 Pennsylvania Ave., Boulder, 303-993-8131. Lunch, Dinner, Brunch*

★**CARNE** $$$$
RiNo / Steak House The newest restaurant from chef Dana Rodriguez, this "steak home" grills up exquisite cuts of beef at a range of price points. Also explore its internationally inspired menu of shared plates and composed entrées and order a customized cocktail from the roving martini cart. Reservations accepted. *2601 Larimer St., 303-953-1558. Dinner*

CARRERA'S TACOS $
Greenwood Village / Mexican Brothers Josh and Ryan Carrera sling West Coast–style tacos at this food-truck-turned-brick-and-mortar. Try the Cali burrito, stuffed with french fries and your choice of protein. Reservations not accepted. *7939 E. Arapahoe Road, Greenwood Village, 720-689-8035. Lunch, Dinner*

CATTIVELLA $$$
Central Park / Italian Chef Elise Wiggins offers rustic, wood-fired Italian fare from a sprawling chef's counter. Reservations accepted. *10195 E. 29th Drive, Suite 110, 303-645-3779. Dinner*

CHEF ZORBA'S $$
Congress Park / Greek Chef Zorba's has served American and Greek fare, burgers, salads, sandwiches, and classic breakfast dishes in the Congress Park neighborhood since 1979. Don't miss the gyro melt and house-made desserts. Reservations not accepted. *2626 E. 12th Ave., 303-321-0091. Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*

CITY, O' CITY $$
Capitol Hill / American This meat-free zone features pizza, vegan pastries, and a full bar. Reservations not accepted. *206 E. 13th Ave., 303-831-6443. Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*

COCHINO TACO $$
Englewood / Mexican The menu at this quirky taqueria features 18 different tacos and a poblano-chile-topped burger. Multiple locations. Reservations not accepted. *3495 S. Downing St., Englewood, 720-573-6174. Lunch, Dinner, Brunch*

CONVIVIO CAFÉ $
Berkeley / Cafe This bilingual cafe is named after the Guatemalan convivio, a get-together where all are welcome. Sip on spiced lattes and indulge in pastries and light lunch fare. Reservations not accepted. *4935 W. 38th Ave. Breakfast, Lunch*

COOHILLS $$$$
LoDo / French Enjoy the French-inspired cuisine made with local, sustainable products at this restaurant that is only a one-minute walk from Ball Arena. Reservations accepted. *1400 Wewatta St., 303-623-5700. Dinner*

COPERTA $$$
Uptown / Italian Tuck into comforting Italian fare at this restaurant, which celebrates the cuisine of Rome and southern Italy. Handmade pastas, creamy burrata, and fiery pollo alla diavola are among the top choices. Reservations accepted. *400 E. 20th Ave., 720-749-4666. Dinner*

CORRIDA $$$$
Boulder / Spanish The rooftop setting gives this elegant Spanish steak house stunning Flatiron views to go with fabulous cocktails and wines. Splurge on the Japanese wagyu or opt for steak from regenerative local farms. Reservations accepted. *1023 Walnut St., Ste. 400, Boulder, 303-444-1333. Dinner, Brunch*

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CORNER OFFICE $$$
Downtown / International Find global comfort food from Jamaican jerk chicken to tuna poke at this retro spot that's also great for old-school cocktails. Reservations accepted. *1401 Curtis St., 303-825-6500. Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner, Brunch*

CORSICA WINE BAR $$
RiNo / Mediterranean This charming eatery has a deep wine list, inventive cocktails, and share-worthy specialties inspired by the French island of Corsica. The kitchen here has a way with grilled veggies. Reservations accepted. *2801 Walnut St., Ste. 100, 720-994-2020. Dinner*

COZY COTTAGE BREAKFAST & LUNCH $$
Berkeley / Breakfast The homey feel of this eatery is perfectly aligned with the menu of signature pancakes, eggs Benedict, and French toast. Reservations accepted. *4363 Tennyson St., 720-855-9800. Breakfast, Lunch*

CUBA CUBA CAFE & BAR $$$
Golden Triangle / Latin American Don't miss the Cubano sandwich, ropa vieja, and mojitos at this bright and breezy family-owned Cuban restaurant. Reservations accepted. *1173 Delaware St., 303-605-2822. Dinner*

★ **DÂN DÃ** $$
Aurora / Vietnamese Family recipes are on the menu at An and Thao Nguyen's cozy Vietnamese eatery dedicated to comfort food. Don't miss the dazzling spring roll towers, bun cha Ha Noi (the dish Anthony Bourdain and Barack Obama shared in Vietnam) and bubbling clay pots. Reservations accepted. *9945 E. Colfax Ave., Aurora, 720-476-7183. Lunch, Dinner*

DAUGHTER THAI KITCHEN & BAR $$$
LoHi / Thai This elegant, date-night-ready Thai restaurant from Ounjit Hardacre features favorites such as pad thai and massaman curry alongside a rotating lineup of rare-in-Denver specialties. Look for whole-fish specials. Reservations accepted. *1700 Platte St., Ste. 140, 720-667-4652. Lunch, Dinner*

DOMO $$
Lincoln Park / Japanese After a number of temporary closures, this bucolic eatery is back to serving its homey Japanese fare in a relaxed atmosphere. Don't miss the curry, which has been a menu mainstay since Domo opened in 1996. Reservations not accepted. *1365 Osage St., 303-595-3666. Lunch, Dinner*

DOS SANTOS $$
City Park West / Mexican The menu at this modern taqueria features light, seafood-centric dishes, such as seared-tuna tostadas, poke nachos, and beer-battered fish tacos. Reservations not accepted. *1475 E. 17th Ave., 303-386-3509. Lunch, Dinner, Brunch*

★ **DOUGH COUNTER** $$
University Hills / Pizza This fast-casual pizzeria specializes in Sicilian- and New York–style pies. For the former, we especially like the Triple Threat, which is striped with marinara, pesto, and vodka sauce. The house-made chicken tenders are also delightful. Reservations not accepted. *2466 S. Colorado Blvd., 303-997-8977. Lunch, Dinner*

DRAGONFLY NOODLE $$
LoDo / Asian This eatery from restaurateur Edwin Zoe (who also owns Zoe Ma Ma) serves noodle dishes from Vietnam, Japan, and other Asian locales. Order ramen with house-made noodles or a brimming bowl of beefy pho. Also try the Boulder location. Reservations not accepted. *1350 16th St., 720-543-8000. Lunch, Dinner*

DUO RESTAURANT $$$$
Highland / Contemporary Owners Stephanie Bonin and Keith Arnold have captured the true essence of the neighborhood restaurant. The seasonal cuisine constantly surprises and comforts, and dessert is worth a visit in itself. Reservations accepted. *2413 W. 32nd Ave., 303-477-4141. Dinner, Brunch*

EARLY BIRD RESTAURANT $
Westminster / American This attractive breakfast and lunch spot offers a well-balanced menu and local ingredients. The all-day breakfast menu includes open-faced omelets and French toasts. Also try the Greenwood Village location. Reservations not accepted. *11940 Bradburn Blvd., Westminster, 303-469-9641. Breakfast, Lunch*

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EDGE RESTAURANT & BAR $$$$
Downtown / Steak House Inside the Four Seasons Hotel Denver, this restaurant serves contemporary steak-house fare by chef Craig Dryhurst. Order the dry-aged buffalo rib-eye and the wedge salad with blue cheese mousse. Reservations accepted. *1111 14th St., 303-389-3050. Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner, Brunch*

EDGEWATER INN $$
Edgewater / Pizza This pizzeria has been family owned and operated for more than 60 years. Try the Howdy Pizza, a combo of sausage, peppers, mushrooms, and jalapeños. Reservations not accepted. *5302 W. 25th Ave., Edgewater, 303-237-3524. Lunch, Dinner*

EL TACO DE MEXICO $
Lincoln Park / Mexican This Denver favorite and James Beard Foundation America's Classics winner has been serving Mexican food with an emphasis on traditional flavors since 1986. Reservations not accepted. *714 Santa Fe Drive, 303-623-3926. Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*

FAMOUS ORIGINAL J'S PIZZA $$
Five Points / Pizza Joshua Pollack's New York–style and rectangular grandma pies are totally customizable and available by the slice. Try the meat lovers with sausage, pepperoni, and diced Taylor ham. Reservations not accepted. *715 E. 26th Ave., 720-420-9102. Lunch, Dinner*

FISH N BEER $$$
RiNo / Seafood Kevin Morrison offers approachable, fresh seafood and a hearty beer list at this casual oysterette. Try the ceviche or wood-fired whole bass. Reservations accepted. *3510 Larimer St., 303-248-3497. Dinner*

FOX AND THE HEN $$
LoHi / Breakfast This sunny brunch spot brightens up any morning. The animal-style hashbrown smothered in American cheese and special sauce is a must, but the fancy toasts are the signature dishes. Reservations accepted. *2257 W. 32nd Ave., 303-862-6795. Breakfast, Lunch, Brunch*

★ **FRASCA FOOD AND WINE** $$$$
Boulder / Italian The elegant fare at Frasca, an ode to the cuisine of Friuli-Venezia Giulia in Italy from owners Bobby Stuckey and chef Lachlan Mackinnon-Patterson, always wows. Splurge on executive chef Ian Palazzola's Friulano menu. Reservations accepted. *1738 Pearl St., Boulder, 303-442-6966. Dinner*

GAIA MASALA AND BURGER $$
Speer / Indian Go for divey tikka masala cheesesteaks and smothered fries at this fast-casual Indian eatery, which serves up an excellent saag, to boot. Also try the Boulder and LoDo locations. Reservations not accepted. *609 Grant St., 720-779-0762. Lunch, Dinner*

THE GINGER PIG $$
Berkeley / Asian Chef-owner Natascha Hess serves Asian-inspired street eats with playful twists. The lamb stir-fry, Hong Kong French toast, and Bangkok balls are must-order dishes. Also try the takeout-only Boulder location. Reservations not accepted. *4262 Lowell Blvd., 720-324-8416. Dinner*

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GLADYS $
Edgewater / American Vegetable small plates feature at this concept at the Edgewater Public Market, where it began as a food counter before expanding to a full-sized restaurant. Don't miss the plant-based Reuben sandwich. Reservations not accepted. *5505 W. 20th Ave., Edgewater, 303-276-3309. Lunch, Dinner*

● **GOUDY'S DELI AND MARKET** $
Washington Park / French Goudy's makes Parisian-style deli sandwiches on locally baked baguettes and also offers prepared foods, international pantry items, more than a dozen styles of house-made sausage, and a killer cheese room for stocking up on dairy products from European and North American artisans. Reservations not accepted. *1207 E. Alameda Ave., 720-710-9473. Lunch, Dinner*

GUARD AND GRACE $$$$
Downtown / Steak House Chef Troy Guard's modern steak house offers a chic setting for its elevated fare. Try the flight of filet mignon. Reservations accepted. *1801 California St., 303-293-8500. Lunch, Dinner*

GUSTO $$$
West Colfax / Italian From chef Lon Symensma of ChoLon fame, this Italian eatery abutting Sloan's Lake plates up a playful variety of antipasti, pastas, and pizza. Make sure to start with an order of focaccia. Reservations accepted. *671 Raleigh St., 303-284-0932. Lunch, Dinner*

HEY KIDDO $$$$
Berkeley / Contemporary From the team behind the Wolf's Tailor and Brutø, this globally inspired restaurant presents fine dining fare in relaxed environs. Try the wagyu beef galbi with chef's rice that's shaken tableside. Reservations accepted. *4337 Tennyson St., Ste. 300, 720-778-2977. Dinner*

★ **HOP ALLEY** $$$$
RiNo / Chinese From Tommy Lee of Uncle, this neighborhood hangout's daily menu is composed of dishes rooted in Chinese tradition with a distinctive flair. If spots are open at the luxurious chef's counter, though, don't miss the exclusive experience. Reservations accepted. *3500 Larimer St., 720-379-8340. Dinner*

ISTANBUL CAFE & BAKERY $
Washington Virginia Vale / Middle Eastern Friendly owner Ismet Yilmaz prepares authentic Turkish pastries and other delights. Try the su böreği (a flaky cheese pastry) or pistachio baklava. Also check out Yilmaz's food truck, Turkish Chef on Wheels. Reservations not accepted. *850 S. Monaco Parkway., Ste. 9, 720-787-7751. Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*

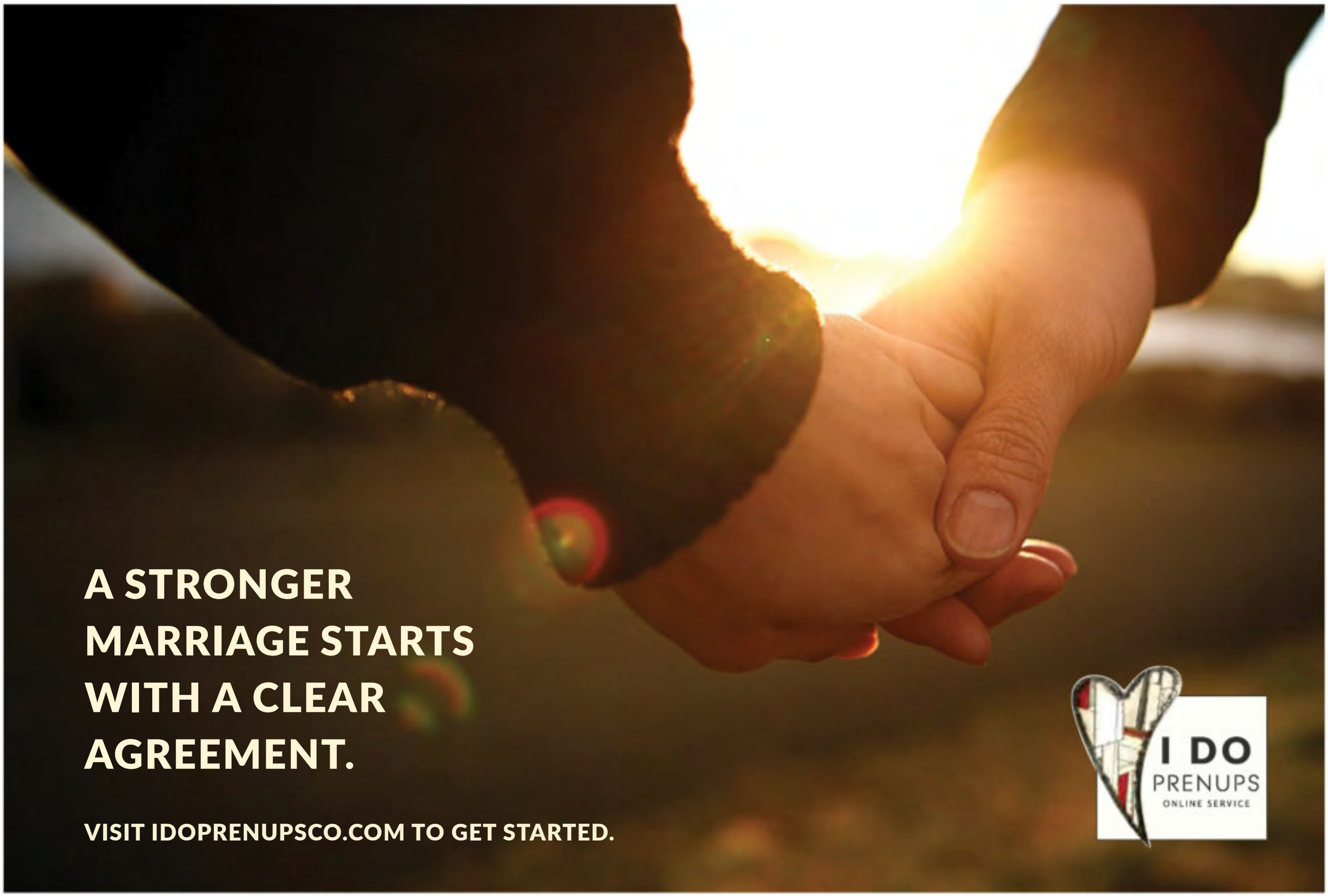
IZAKAYA DEN $$$
Platt Park / Japanese This sibling to Sushi Den next door focuses on traditional small plates that pair well with Japanese beer, whisky, and sake. But the ultra-fresh nigiri and sashimi are worth a try too. Reservations accepted. *1487-A S. Pearl St., 303-777-0691. Lunch, Dinner*

JOVANINA'S BROKEN ITALIAN $$$
LoDo / Italian This gorgeous LoDo eatery expands on traditional Italian fare with a penchant for unexpected, seasonal ingredients as well as house-pickled and -preserved produce. Handmade pastas and wood-fired focaccia and pizzas provide an additional draw, as does a well-stocked amari cart. Reservations accepted. *1520 Blake St., 720-541-7721. Dinner*

KAWA NI $$$
LoHi / Asian Connecticut transplant Bill Taibe helms this upscale izakaya concept in LoHi. Peruse the eclectic menu of noodles, sushi, and small plates, and don't miss the shaved broccoli miso goma. Reservations accepted. *1900 W. 32nd Ave., 303-455-9208. Dinner*

★ **KIKÉ'S RED TACOS** $
LoHi / Mexican This brick-and-mortar location of a popular Mexican food truck is known for its quesabirria tacos, which come stuffed with cheese and your choice of meat. Reservations not accepted. *1200 W. 38th Ave., 720-397-0591. Lunch, Dinner*

LA CHIVA $$
Platt Park / Colombian This food-truck-turned-restaurant is a cozy, colorful place to enjoy the cuisine of chef-owner Jorge Aguirre's native Colombia. Try the sancocho, a hearty, slow-simmered soup made with chicken, plantain, yuca, and corn. Reservations accepted. *1446 S. Broadway, 720-389-9847. Lunch, Dinner*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LA DIABLA POZOLE Y MEZCAL $$

Ballpark / Mexican This lively eatery from chef Jose Avila earned a Michelin Bib Gourmand rating for its comforting pozole and other affordably priced Mexican fare. Don't miss the daily pastor selections served from the spinning trompo outside or whole-animal barbacoa on the weekends. Reservations not accepted. *2233 Larimer St., 720-519-1060. Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner, Brunch*

LA CALLE TAQUERIA Y CARNITAS $

Valverde / Mexican This is a must-visit destination for taco lovers. Try the tacos al pastor and carnitas and don't skip the salsa bar. Reservations not accepted. *1565 W. Alameda Ave., 720-583-6586. Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*

LA FILLETTE BAKERY $$

Montclair / French This French-inspired bakery makes magical laminated creations, including a brunch burger on a split croissant. A stop for a quick meal always results in a boxful of pastries for later. Reservations not accepted. *6217 E. 14th Ave., 303-355-0022. Breakfast, Lunch, Brunch*

★ **LA FORÊT** $$$$

Speer / French Transport yourself to an aspen grove at this bistro and bar. Head in during pastis hour to sample an aperitif with small plates, or dine on dishes like stag au poivre or rabbit vadouvan. Reservations not accepted. *38 S. Broadway, 303-351-7938. Dinner*

LE FRENCH $$

Hampden / French This chic Belleview Station bistro, owned by French-Senegalese sisters, transports diners through Parisian cuisine with African influences. Brunch makes weekend mornings feel a little more sophisticated. Also try the Hale location. Reservations accepted. *4901 S. Newport St., 720-710-8963. Lunch, Dinner, Brunch*

LEEZAKAYA $$$$

Aurora / Japanese From the team behind Tofu Story and Mono Mono Korean Fried Chicken, this swanky eatery boasts an expansive menu of Japanese bites and sake. Reservations accepted. *2710 S. Havana St., Aurora, 720-769-6595. Lunch, Dinner*

LEVEN DELI CO. $$

Golden Triangle / Deli Classic deli meets California cool at this bright spot. Get a taste of the house-made pastrami on the Reuben sandwich. Also try the newer Leven Supply Co. in Washington Park West. Reservations not accepted. *123 W. 12th Ave., 303-325-5691. Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*

LITTLE ARTHUR'S $$$

Capitol Hill / American Located inside Out of the Barrel Taproom, Little Arthur's crafts East Coast specialities such as margherita pizzas and cheesesteaks. Reservations not accepted. *205 E. Seventh Ave., Dinner*

LITTLE OLLIE'S $$$

Cherry Creek / Asian This resturant has been serving classic Chinese American fare with fresh ingredients for decades. There's even a short menu of dim sum. Reservations accepted. *2364 E. Third Ave., 303-316-8888. Lunch, Dinner*

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LOU'S ITALIAN SPECIALTIES $$
Curtis Park / Italian This takeout-only spot by Joshua Pollack of Rosenberg's Bagels & Delicatessen takes after classic tri-state Italian delis. Try the Louie, packed with genoa salami, capicola, ham, and provolone cheese and drizzles of oil and vinegar. Reservations not accepted. *3357 N. Downing St., 720-287-3642. Lunch, Dinner*

LUCHADOR TACO & MORE $$
Whittier / Mexican Chef Zuri Resendiz's vibrant takes on Mexican street food are refined and full of flavor. Don't miss the Peruvian-inspired plates, either, such as the lomo saltado or causa tartare. Reservations accepted. *2030 E. 28th Ave., 303-954-0672. Dinner*

★ **LUCINA EATERY & BAR** $$$
South Park Hill / Latin American Bold flavors from Latin America, the Caribbean, and coastal Spain tantalize at this lively restaurant. Try the mofongo (plantain mash) or the two-person paella with rotating toppings served only on Fridays and Saturdays. Reservations accepted. *2245 Kearney St., Ste. 101, 720-814-1053. Dinner*

★ **MAJOR TOM** $$$$
RiNo / American This lounge from the team behind Beckon offers a Champagne-centric drinks menu and a delectable lineup of shareable bites. Enjoy larger-format plates at a table inside, or throw back some oysters on the beautiful patio. Reservations accepted. *2845 Larimer St., 303-848-9777. Dinner, Brunch*

★ **MAKFAM** $$
Baker / Chinese The Chinese cuisine, inspired by family recipes, at this fast-casual eatery blends tradition with a whole lot of fun. Try the jian bing (scallion pancake) sandwiches or Mama Wan's pork belly, with 24-hour braised pork served over rice. Don't miss the midday munchies menu starting at 2 p.m. Reservations not accepted. *39 W. First Ave. Lunch, Dinner*

★ **MARIGOLD** $$$$
Lyons / European This intimate, light-filled restaurant serves seasonally driven fare. The pink-peppercorn-laced farinata (chickpea pancake) is a delicious mainstay of the frequently changing menu; the amaro-centric cocktail program is also delightful. Reservations accepted. *405 Main St., Ste. B, Lyons, 303-823-2333. Dinner*

MASON'S DUMPLING SHOP $$
Aurora / Chinese A menu of house-made steamed, boiled, and pan-fried dumplings complements a selection of noodle and rice bowls and vegetable-forward sides at this Los Angeles–born spot. Xiao long bao (soup dumplings) are the star. Reservations not accepted. *9655 E. Montview Blvd., 303-600-8998. Lunch, Dinner*

MERCANTILE $$$
LoDo / American Chef Alex Seidel offers upscale, contemporary farm-to-table fare, with a menu divided into earth, sea, grain, and pasture. Start with roasted vegetables before moving on to pastas and meaty entrées. Also try the lunchtime prix fixe menu. Reservations accepted. *1701 Wynkoop St., Ste. 155, 720-460-3733. Lunch, Dinner*

MIZUNA $$$$
Capitol Hill / Contemporary Chef-owner Frank Bonanno's seasonal cuisine capitalizes on fresh ingredients. Don't miss the decadent beef Wellington, or opt for the chef's tasting menu for a little of everything. Reservations accepted. *225 E. Seventh Ave., 303-832-4778. Dinner*

★ **MOLOTOV KITSCHEN & COCKTAILS** $$$$
City Park / Eastern European The ever-changing menu at this aptly kitschy restaurant celebrates the cuisine of Ukraine, with shoutouts to other Slavic traditions. Try house-baked breads, creative takes on borscht, and Eastern European dumplings. Reservations accepted. *3333 E. Colfax Ave., 303-316-3333. Dinner*

NA FAVOLA $$
Greenwood Village / Italian The Italian proprietors behind this friendly trattoria use simple, carefully sourced ingredients to create fresh pasta dishes and light, crisp Roman-style pizzas. Reservations accepted. *5909 S. University Blvd., Greenwood Village, 983-999-4139. Lunch, Dinner*

NANA'S DIM SUM & DUMPLINGS $$
LoHi / Chinese Enjoy a spread of house-made dumplings and other shareable Chinese plates at this swanky restaurant in LoHi. Xiao long bao lovers should go for the bite-size, soup-filled

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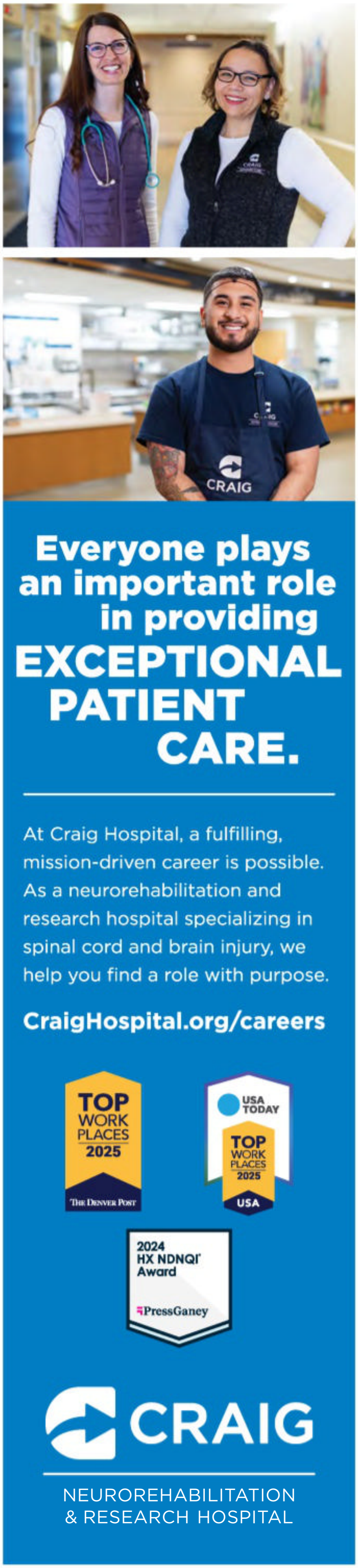
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NARRATIVE $$$$
Cherry Creek / American Chef Paul Nagan serves gussied-up versions of American favorites, such as shrimp and grits with Tabasco butter, at this sleek eatery. Reservations accepted. *222 Milwaukee St., 720-571-8080. Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*

NI TUYO $$$
Belcaro / Mexican Visit this lively Bonnie Brae eatery for bubbly molcajetes, piping-hot stone bowls of Mexican meats and veggies stewed in salsa. Or grab a seat at the bar for a tasty margarita with an order of tortilla chips and guacamole. Reservations not accepted. *730 S. University Blvd., 303-282-8896. Dinner*

NOBLE RIOT $$$
RiNo / American Find charcuterie boards, immaculate fried chicken, and other bites at this sommelier-operated natural wine bar. This is the place to find uncommon pét-nats and orange wines. Reservations accepted. *1336 27th St., 303-993-5330. Dinner*

NORTH COUNTY $$
Lowry Field / Mexican With a beach bar atmosphere in a landlocked space, this San Diego–inspired taqueria boasts a daily catch of grilled fish tacos and a bar full of tequila libations and spiked sodas batched and bottled in house. Reservations accepted. *94 Rampart Way, 720-532-0106. Lunch, Dinner, Brunch*

OAK AT FOURTEENTH $$$$
Boulder / Seasonal This bright space just off the Pearl Street Mall offers a diverse, ever-changing menu of seasonal, oak-fired eats from chef Steve Redzikowski and creative cocktails from Bryan Dayton. Order the kale salad, roasted ocean trout, or a handmade pasta. Reservations accepted. *1400 Pearl St., Boulder, 303-444-3622. Dinner*

OCEAN PRIME $$$$
LoDo / Seafood A marriage between land and sea, this Larimer Square supper club offers steakhouse dining and fresh fish in one swank space. Reservations accepted. *1465 Larimer St., 303-825-3663. Dinner*

★ODIE B'S $
Sunnyside / American Sandwiches reach their prime at this fast-casual joint. Try twists on classics like the fried chicken sandwich with deviled egg spread or the chopped cheese with breakfast sausage. Also try the Cole location. Reservations not accepted. *2651 W. 38th Ave., 303-993-8078. Breakfast, Lunch, Brunch*

OHANA ISLAND KITCHEN $
LoHi / Seafood Celebrate the 808 at this Hawaiian-inspired eatery that serves top-notch tuna poke, Spam musubi, and more in a cozy LoHi space. Reservations not accepted. *2563 15th St., 303-718-6580. Lunch, Dinner*

OLIVE & FINCH $$
City Park West / American Discover wholesome, inspired meals at this restaurant, bakery, and juice bar, where you'll find a espresso drinks, artisan sandwiches, hearty soups, tasty salads, and daily pastries. Also try the Cherry Creek, Union Station, or Denver Performing Arts Complex locations. Reservations not accepted. *1552 E. 17th Ave., 303-832-8663. Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*

OSTERIA ALBERICO $$
Englewood / Italian The latest from the Frasca Hospitality Group serves up osteria-style Italian cusine: rustic, straightforward, and comforting, but with the same attention to hospitality we've come to expect from Tavernetta, Sunday Vinyl, and Frasca Food and Wine. Reservations accepted. *3455 S. University Blvd., Engelwood, 303-970-8840. Dinner*

★OTOTO $$$
Platt Park / Japanese From the team behind Sushi Den and Izakaya Den, this sleek eatery breaks away from its Den Corner counterparts by focusing on more casual Japanese eats. Try the yellowtail collar grilled over white oak charcoal. Reservations accepted. *1501 S. Pearl St., 303-942-1416. Dinner, Brunch*

PADOCA BAKERY & MARKET $
Montclair / Brazilian This Brazilian bakery serves an assortment of sweet and savory goodies. Try traditional items, like the brigadeiro or the pão de queijo, with a latte, or ask about lunchtime sandwich and burger specials. Reservations not accepted. *950A Jersey St., 720-520-0074. Breakfast, Lunch*

PETE'S KITCHEN $
Cheesman Park / American A Denver staple for late-night food, Pete's is known for its breakfasts but serves burgers, gyros, and souvlaki sandwiches all day. Perfect for soaking up the Colfax scene. Reservations not accepted. *1962 E. Colfax Ave., 303-321-3139. Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*

PHO 79 $
Broomfield / Asian Some of the best Vietnamese pho noodle soup you'll find on the Front Range. Even the savory veggie pho broth is full of flavor. Reservations accepted. *6650 W. 120th Ave., Ste. 5, Broomfield, 303-439-0028. Lunch, Dinner*

PIZZERIA LUI $$
Lakewood / Pizza Seasonal pies come out of the oven with just the right char. Try the street taco pizza, which is topped with house-made chorizo, corn, cotija cheese, tomatillo salsa, mozarella, and cilantro. Reservations not accepted. *5380 W. Mississippi Ave., Lakewood, 303-922-3202. Dinner*

THE PLIMOTH $$$$
Skyland / American At this upscale neighborhood eatery, an emphasis on locally farmed and foraged ingredients results in an ever-changing menu of seasonal dishes, like cauliflower paprikash and Ollin Farms tatsoi salad. Reservations accepted. *2335 E. 28th Ave., 303-297-1215. Dinner*

★POINT EASY $$$$
Whittier / Contemporary This stylish farm-to-table eatery produces feasts with thoughtfully sourced ingredients, many of which are grown locally. Pair the mushroom risotto or seasonal crudo with with a specialty cocktail or wine recommendation from the knowledgeable staff. Reservations accepted. *2000 E. 28th Ave., 303-233-5656. Dinner*

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PONY UP $$

LoDo / Pub This casual bar serves comforting late-night fare such as the house specialty French dip sandwiches in several tempting styles (we crush the Saigon and the Chicago) and fried chicken with craft cocktails and lots of bubbly. Reservations not accepted. *1808 Blake St., 720-710-8144. Dinner*

THE PORCHETTA HOUSE $

City Park West / Italian The porchetta at this lunch-to-late-night eatery is an expression of both Italian tradition and globally minded creativity. Try the al pastor sandwich loaded with caramelized pineapple pico and cotija cheese. Reservations not accepted. *1510 Humboldt St., 303-861-7333. Lunch, Dinner*

POST OAK BARBECUE $$

Berkeley / Barbecue Texas barbecue smoked over the restaurant's namesake wood is the draw at this Tennyson Street joint. Don't miss the certified Angus prime brisket, by the half-pound or in a sandwich or taco. Reservations not accepted. *4000 Tennyson St., 303-458-1555. Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*

PROTO'S PIZZERIA NAPOLETANA $$

LoHi / Pizza Enjoy wood-fired Italian-style pizza, fresh salads, and a nice wine list at this local chain. A must if you're craving an East Coast–style clam pizza. Also try the Broomfield location. Reservations accepted. *2401 15th St., 720-855-9400. Lunch, Dinner*

ROS SIAM $$

Jefferson Park / Thai This restaurant sits inside an inviting Jefferson Park house (complete with an inviting patio) and serves up exciting Thai dishes. Reservations accepted. *2637 W. 26th Ave., 303-953-0291. Lunch, Dinner*

SAME CAFÉ $$

City Park West / Seasonal SAME is short for So All May Eat, which means pay-what-you-can pricing with an ever-changing menu. Reservations not accepted. *2023 E. Colfax Ave., 720-530-6853. Lunch*

★SAP SUA $$$

Congress Park / Vietnamese This smart eatery from chef-owners Ni and Anna Nguyen finds its culinary footing in Vietnamese flavors. Herbaceous offerings like culantro-capped tomato toast and lemongrass pork shoulder are favorites of the menu. Reservations accepted. *2550 E. Colfax Ave., 303-736-2303. Dinner*

SAWA $$

University / International African, Mediterranean, and Middle Eastern dishes mingle together in this Sudanese-owned restaurant's buffet line. Less hungry patrons can also order from the à la carte menu. Reservations not accepted. *1737 E. Evans Ave., 720-505-8937. Lunch, Dinner*

★SPUNTINO $$$

Highland / Italian Enjoy the locally sourced menu at this Italian-inspired, husband-and-wife-owned spot. Go for any of the dishes with South Indian influences—informed by chef Cindhura Reddy's heritage—like cavatelli with chicken korma. House-made gelatos in unique flavors are also a must. Reservations accepted. *2639 W. 32nd Ave., 303-433-0949. Dinner*

★SUNDAY VINYL $$$

LoDo / European This Union Station wine bar and audiphile dream destination offers warm hospitality, exquisite cuisine, and an extensive bottle list, all to the beat of a vinyl-only playlist. Order the caviar-topped hash brown patty. Reservations accepted. *1803 16th St., 720-738-1803. Dinner*

SUSHI BY SCRATCH $$$$

LoDo / Japanese Chefs Phillip Frankland Lee and Margarita Kallas-Lee bring their omakase experience to a subterranean space in Larimer Square. Expect nearly 20 courses of sushi and other creative bites—plus wine, whisky, and sake pairings—served with dramatic flare and expert guidance. Reservations accepted. *1441 Larimer St., 720-724-7729. Dinner*

SWITCHBACK SMOKEHOUSE $$

Kittredge / Barbecue Dig into fruitwood-smoked meats like Montreal-style brisket and duck breast at this mountain-town barbecue joint with a shaded patio overlooking Bear Creek. Don't miss the Devil's Elbow sandwich. Reservations not accepted. *26220 CO 74, Kittredge, 303-200-0878. Lunch, Dinner*

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Leading the leaders in medicine

Optum Colorado honors all of this year's top doctors, especially ours *(pictured above, left to right)*: **Jonathan Zonca**, MD, Family Medicine; **Matthew Lewis**, MD, Family Medicine; **Raechel O'Kelley**, MD, Internal Medicine; **Kathleen Weiss**, MD, Internal Medicine; **John Panozzo**, MD, Family Medicine; and **Scott London**, MD, Neurology.

All are dedicated, passionate leaders among their colleagues, within their profession, and throughout our community. We are proud to see them consistently recognized as top doctors by 5280.

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TABLE 6 $$$

Speer / American This space's warm and cozy atmosphere extends to chef Aniedra Nichols' American bistro cuisine, which is elevated by haute foodie touches. Don't miss the house-made tots with ever-changing accoutrements—a long-standing Table 6 tradition. Reservations accepted. *609 Corona St., 303-831-8800. Dinner*

TAI TAI JAPANESE $$

Southmoor Park / Japanese Enjoy quality sushi hand rolls and poke bowls at this casual south Denver spot from chef Wayne Conwell of the much-missed Sushi Sasa. Start with a Japanese single malt whisky. Reservations accepted. *5078 E. Hampden Ave., 720-287-4321. Lunch, Dinner*

TEMAKI DEN $$

RiNo / Japanese Chef Kenta Kamo and Sushi Den's Toshi Kizaki team up to bring delectable temaki, aburi nigiri, and craft beverages to this restaurant inside the Source. Sushi counter seating is the best spot for watching the action. Reservations accepted. *3330 Brighton Blvd., Ste. 110, 225-405-0811. Dinner*

TEOCALLI COCINA $$

Arvada / Mexican This industrial-meets-tropical Mexican restaurant offers elevated entrées like charred beef short rib with grilled bone marrow, pork shank pibil, and hamachi ceviche. Also try the Lafayette location. Reservations accepted. *5770 Olde Wadsworth Blvd., Arvada, 303-923-3170. Lunch, Dinner*

TESSA DELICATESSEN $

Montclair / Deli This modern, all-day eatery from Vince Howard, formerly of Del Rey Deli in Los Angeles, serves hot and cold sandwiches and classic salads to the Montclair neighborhood. The burger is the menu's sleeper hit. Reservations not accepted. *5724 E. Colfax Ave., 720-746-9138. Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*

TOCABE, AN AMERICAN INDIAN EATERY $

Berkeley / American Feast on Indigenous fare such as grain-based posu bowls and fry bread tacos made with ingredients sourced from Native producers at this fast-casual spot. The company also has an online marketplace for Native-produced bison and pantry goods and donates prepared meals to tribal communities in need. Reservations not accepted. *3536 W. 44th Ave., 720-524-8282. Lunch, Dinner*

TOFU STORY $$

Aurora / Korean House-made tofu is the draw at this Korean eatery from chef-restaurateur J.W. Lee. Order the spicy seafood soondubu stew with silken tofu and pressure-cooked rice that's presented tableside. Marinated crab is a hard-to-find house specialty. Reservations not accepted. *2060 S. Havana St., Aurora, 303-954-9372. Lunch, Dinner*

★**TRAVELING MERCIES** $$$

Aurora / Seafood Annette's Caroline Glover expands her offerings at the Stanley Marketplace with this petite oyster and cocktail bar. Beyond bivalves, try the anchovy and baguette with French churned butter. The house martini is almost meal in itself. Reservations accepted. *2501 Dallas St., Ste. 311, Aurora. Dinner*

TU'S KITCHEN $$

Broomfield / Vietnamese Thuy Le, former owner of Boulder's Chez Thuy, delivers flavor-packed Vietnamese cuisine. Try seafood specialties like the basil-topped snails served on a sizzling cast-iron plate. Reservations accepted. *6500 W. 120th Ave., Broomfield, 303-975-6001. Lunch, Dinner*

ULTREIA $$$

LoDo / Spanish Indulge in Iberian fare at this Union Station fixture from chef Adam Branz. Stop in for pintxos and Negronis at happy hour and stay for more tapas and large plates. Can't decide? Opt for the Chef's Feast, at $90 for two people. Reservations accepted. *1701 Wynkoop St., Ste. 125, 303-534-1970. Lunch, Dinner, Brunch*

VINAMEALS $$

Littleton / Vietnamese In addition to excellent pho and clay pots, this quaint eatery offers something not found in many metro shopping centers: Vietnamese breakfast, including warming rice porridge and egg fried rice. *1500 W. Littleton Blvd., 303-276-8178. Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*

VINH XUONG BAKERY $

Athmar Park / Vietnamese This family-owned bakery has roots in Denver that stretch back more than 25 years. The coffeehouse-style

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counter serves up delicious bánh mì sandwiches and other tasty Vietnamese treats. We recommend a bánh cam (sesame ball) for dessert. Reservations not accepted. *2370 Alameda Ave., 303-922-0999. Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*

★**THE WOLF'S TAILOR** $$$$

Sunnyside / Contemporary This Michelin-starred restaurant from chef-restaurateur Kelly Whitaker transforms local ingredients into a globally minded, prix fixe tasting menu. Don't get too full before hitting executive pastry chef Emily Thompson's dessert course. Reservations accepted. *4058 Tejon St., 720-456-6705. Dinner*

WORK & CLASS $$$

RiNo / American This elevated meat-and-three concept from chef Dana Rodriguez offers a delicious hybrid of American and Latin cuisine in raucous, repurposed-shipping-container digs. Our picks: the rotisserie chicken, chickpea croquettes, and the roasted Colorado lamb. Reservations not accepted. *2500 Larimer St., 303-292-0700. Dinner*

XIQUITA $$$

Uptown / Mexican Chef Erasmo Casiano serves soulful fare inspired by the cuisine of Mexico City. Don't miss the nixtamal masa dishes—tacos, of course, but also tamales, sopes, and molotes—and witty takes on classic cocktails. Reservations accepted. *500 E. 19th Ave., 720-287-2701. Dinner*

YACHT CLUB $

Cole / American Enjoy classic and creative cocktails built with house-made ingredients alongside an array of snacks (yes, hot dogs are hot here) at this James Beard Award–nominated bar and lounge. Reservations not accepted. *3701 N. Williams St., 720-443-1135. Dinner*

★**YUAN WONTON** $$

North Park Hill / Asian House-made dumplings earn top billing at this ambitious eatery from James Beard Award–nominated chef Penelope Wong. Head in on Fridays for a dim-sum-themed lunch that showcases the best of Wong's hand-folded delicacies. Reservations accepted. *2878 Fairfax St., 303-320-5642. Lunch*

ZOCALITO LATIN BISTRO $$$

Downtown / Mexican Chef/owner Michael Beary's upscale Oaxacan eatery found a home in the heart of Denver. Try the pork tenderloin with red mole sauce (made with chiles sourced directly from Mexican growers) and any of the tamales. Reservations accepted. *999 18th St., Suite 107, 720-923-5965. Dinner*

ZOMO $$

Englewood / Asian Owners Alysia Davey and Ryan Anderson serve family recipes inspired by their Vietnamese and Chinese roots. Try the crispy, crêpe-like bánh xèo or Grandma's comforting meatloaf laced with glass noodles. Reservations accepted. *3457 S. Broadway, Englewood, 720-739-8882. Lunch, Dinner*

▶ These listings are in no way related to advertising in 5280. If you find that a restaurant differs significantly from the information in its listing or your favorite restaurant is missing from the Dining Guide, please let us know. Write us at 5280 Elevated, Inc., 1675 Larimer St., Suite 675, Denver, CO 80202 or dining@5280.com.

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2025 - A FEW SPOTS LEFT!

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Embark on a magical five-day getaway to Manhattan, departing December 5, 2025. Experience the best of the Big Apple's festive charm—Broadway, the Rockettes Holiday Spectacular, Rockefeller Center, Central Park, the Statue of Liberty, and more. Enjoy a guided city tour, 4 nights in the heart of NYC, 6 meals, and top-tier accommodations.

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Experience the best of Hawaii on this 3-island adventure featuring first-class accommodations across Oahu, the Big Island, and Maui, with guided visits to Pearl Harbor, Volcanoes National Park, a traditional Hawaiian luau, and more. Enjoy a seamless journey with included inter-island flights, sightseeing tours, and time to relax in paradise.

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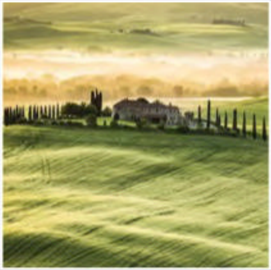
ARIZONA | MARCH 15, 2026 | 6 DAYS - BOOK NOW WITH CODE 207562

Ride the rails through Arizona's most stunning landscapes on this 6-day adventure featuring two historic train journeys—the Grand Canyon Railway and the Verde Canyon Railroad—paired with guided sightseeing in Sedona, Jerome, and Montezuma Castle. Enjoy scenic drives, cultural landmarks, and Western-style entertainment.



Culinary Journey Through Tuscany + Florence

ITALY | MARCH 17, 2026 | 9 DAYS - BOOK NOW WITH CODE 207558

Savor the flavors and scenery of Italy on this culinary tour through Tuscany and Florence, featuring wine tastings, a pasta-making class, and guided visits to hill towns like Siena, San Gimignano, and Volterra. Enjoy a Tuscan estate dinner, local farm experiences, and Florence's cultural treasures while staying in charming, first-class accommodations.

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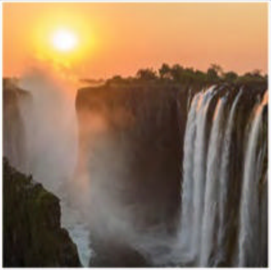
JAPAN | MAY 7, 2026 | 12 DAYS - BOOK NOW WITH CODE 207568

Embark on a guided tour of Japan by high-speed bullet train, featuring Tokyo, Kyoto, Hiroshima, and Osaka, with cultural experiences like sushi making, a tea ceremony, and a Geisha show. Highlights include Mt. Fuji, vibrant markets, temples, and culinary adventures throughout Japan's most iconic cities.

Alaska: Call of the Wild

ALASKA | JULY 16, 2026 | 7 DAYS - BOOK NOW WITH CODE 207561

Explore Alaska's breathtaking wilderness on a 7-day land journey featuring Anchorage, Denali National Park, a scenic domed rail ride, and a glacier and wildlife cruise in Kenai Fjords National Park. Spot wildlife like bears and moose, experience rugged landscapes, and enjoy unforgettable excursions by rail, coach, and boat.



South Africa & Victoria Falls Adventure

AFRICA | OCTOBER 30, 2026 | 13 DAYS - BOOK NOW WITH CODE 207560

Explore South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Botswana on an African adventure featuring Cape Town, Victoria Falls, and multiple game drives in renowned reserves like Dinokeng and Chobe National Park, with opportunities to see elephants, lions, rhinos, and other African wildlife.

Switzerland & Rhine Christmas Markets River Cruise

SWITZERLAND + GERMANY | NOVEMBER 30, 2026 | 9 DAYS - BOOK NOW WITH CODE 207557

Celebrate the season on a festive river cruise through Switzerland, France, and Germany, featuring charming Christmas markets, guided city tours, and scenic stops along the Rhine. Enjoy holiday cheer with mulled wine, traditional treats, and cultural highlights in Lucerne, Strasbourg, Cologne, and more.

Montreal & Quebec City Christmas

CANADA | NOVEMBER 30, 2026 | 6 DAYS - BOOK NOW WITH CODE 207564

Experience the magic of Montreal and Quebec City during the Christmas season with a 4-day tour featuring iconic attractions like the Chateau Frontenac, Notre Dame Cathedral, Underground City, and Old Quebec's Christmas Market, plus scenic rail travel through Canada's winter landscape.

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DENVER'S TOP DOCTORS 2025

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 67

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HAS DAVID ROCHE CRACKED THE CODE OR IS HE JUST ANOTHER CRACKPOT?

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 93

not being there to share it—made me feel like an absentee father. I wondered if I was sacrificing my kids to chase a midlife crisis.

Nothing seemed certain, especially not the race: With one day to go, I still didn't have a plan. Roche is a fast starter. His Leadville mission basically began with a thought experiment: *What if I treated the first three miles of a 100-miler like a 5K?* Roche and his wife/trainer, Megan, decided he'd need to be in sub-four-minute-mile shape. Roche had kept a detailed spreadsheet of his paces that predicted he'd win Leadville with a time of 15 hours and 27 minutes. His calculations were off by 26 seconds.

I dug into my data in search of similar specificity. Unlike Roche, I was a horrible starter. My runs typically began with shortness of breath followed by the panicked mental mantra *I can't do this*. I gained enough experience over time to know I'd relax around the third mile. At the same time, Daniel kept pounding prudence into my head: *Don't go out fast. You'll tire yourself out.* He thought I would cross the finish line in about five hours, which seemed too vague—not to mention too pessimistic. My stats told me I could do better. My aspirational pace was 11:36 per mile. If I could maintain that speed for 21 miles, I'd finish in four hours, three minutes, and 36 seconds.

The race began at Granby Ranch, a small ski resort about 20 miles north of Winter Park. A few minutes before 7 a.m., dozens of runners who were dressed like me—hat, shorts, shades, pack, trail shoes—gathered on a gravel drive at the base, surrounded by summer green hills on three sides. Most runners formed in circles with their friends. I was alone to contemplate the monster looming in front of me: an immediate three-mile, 800-foot incline to the first peak. Finally, the organizer squeezed a rubber chicken (it was that kind of event), and the race started.

Daniel's caution prevailed—though probably it was fear. Over much of the first mile, I walked with the rest of the pack and watched my pace tick into the upper two-digits. Then, around a switchback, I spotted space in the traffic. I had not missed Hank's "hi," skipped doughnuts with dad, and chugged metallic-butthole-flavored supplements simply to survive. My entire life was about *finishing*—about grinding through each day. Roche's clichés flashed through my head. "Shoot your shot." "You got this." "You're a boss." I started running.

Granby Ranch offers unencumbered views of the Continental Divide. I barely saw them. My eyes pinged from the trail to my watch—to check pace and gel-feeding times—back to the trail. I remember three things clearly. One: As I passed a group, the leader called out to his friends, "Watch out. Real runner coming through." (I don't think he was being sarcastic.) Two: A temporary race buddy and I plowed up the steepest pitch on the course, sometimes using our hands to get holds. At the top of the climb, both of us heaving, he said, "Thanks for setting a strong pace there."

Three: Back when Tommy was one, my wife and I visited my best friend at Granby Ranch, and it quickly became clear our dynamic had changed. My friend and I used to pass the time drinking, golfing, and smoking cigarettes. None of those activities are recommended for babies. We eventually went on a hike, Tommy strapped to my chest, and after about a mile the path split. The left route took us home, while the

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right one strayed into more remote territory. It wasn't even a decision. It was hot outside, and Tommy was getting fussy. We veered left.

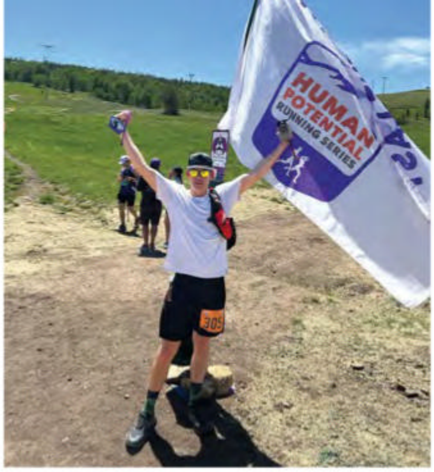
Now, near the end of my race, the course came to the same fork. I kept right.

I CROSSED THE FINISH line in four hours and 37 minutes—34 minutes off my planned pace. I didn't care. I had pushed myself as hard as I could go. I had achieved something I didn't think possible. I had shot my shot and finished fifth out of 39 runners. Once my hips stopped aching, I was sure I'd understand how this race had changed my life.

I'm still waiting.

I never expected parenting to be so full of doubt. Do we let sleeping babies lie or put them on strict nap schedules? Do we reason with misbehaving toddlers or send them to timeout? Breast milk or formula? Screens or no? And if we make the wrong choices, will they fall behind? Be bullied? Hate us? Worse yet, hate themselves?

That's why I get sucked into so many parenting posts on Instagram. Each influencer knows how to get your kids to eat their broccoli, poop in the toilet, and sleep through the night. You just need to follow their advice—and please subscribe. I'm always full of optimism for a few days before feeling like a failure when their "scientifically proven" tips don't work for me.



The author shortly after crossing the finish line.

In retrospect, that's also why Roche initially aggravated me and eventually converted me: the assurance his training plan seemed to promise. If I followed his instructions, I would run fast over a long distance. And I did—fast and long for me, anyway. But weeks after the race, I'm still filled with doubt. I fear I didn't take enough carbs. I wonder if 21 miles was too short to judge not only Roche, but myself. I worry people will think this quest was stupid; I worry I'll think it was stupid.

Life returned to normal after Granby Ranch. Tommy loved watching my race videos and made me promise to take him on my next one—not to watch, but to compete. Hank hasn't said hi to me, but he grinned and shook like Santa Claus when I walked in the door. My wife and I have filled my morning running hour with walks through the trees near our house.

Tommy also slugged me because I wouldn't let him watch *Frozen*. Hank continues to rise before the sun. And recently, my wife and I engaged in a knockout clash over, what else, how we're raising the kids. We didn't even know we were arguing until we were suddenly shouting at each other over the foot of the bed.

Later that day, we dropped the boys off for parents' night out at church and went to dinner. We mended our rift by playing a question game for new couples. For example, "Given the choice of anyone in the world, whom would you want as a dinner guest?" (Her: Barack Obama. Me: Hugh Grant.) By the time we'd polished off our margaritas and ventured out the door, we were laughing. She moved toward the car to go pick up the kids, but I pulled her onto the patio to watch the sunset. There was no need to rush. ▲

Spencer Campbell is *5280*'s deputy editor. Send feedback to letters@5280.com.

Courtesy of Jessica LaRusso

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5280 SCENE CALENDAR

PROMOTIONS | EVENTS | SPONSORSHIPS

Motorized Madness Media Challenge

Children's Hospital Colorado | 9 a.m. to 12 p.m.

The Motorized Madness Media Challenge is a fun-filled morning of exhilarating remote control car racing where everyone is racing for smiles, and ultimately, the end to pediatric cancer. Each team is made up of a pediatric cancer patient, a local media or sports personality, a local race car driver, and one of MAF's amazing community sponsors. Motorized Madness is open to the public and FREE to attend!

For more information, visit morganadamsfoundation.org/all-events.

Fill a Plate for Hunger Benefiting We Don't Waste

ReelWorks Denver | Cocktail hour at 5 p.m. Dinner & Program Start at 6:30 p.m.

Support food access in our community with a night of incredible food and drink from the top local chefs with an exciting live and silent auction. All proceeds benefit We Don't Waste, Denver's largest independent food recovery organization.

Information and tickets at fillaplate.org.

Children's Museum's 52nd Birthday Bash

Children's Museum of Denver at Marsico Campus | 6:00 p.m. to 10:30 p.m.

Join us for an evening of tasty bites from some of Denver's top caterers, open bars and auctions. Then, get ready to dance the night away! All funds raised benefit the Museum's important work.

Information and tickets at mychildsmuseum.org.

TENNYSON CENTER for CHILDREN
SEP
12

Tennyson Center for Children's Mile High Q & Groove

Mile High Station | 6 - 10 p.m.

Now in its 15th year, this highly anticipated concert brings the community together to support kids healing from trauma and mental health challenges. Enjoy food, drinks, a live auction, and more, all for a cause that changes lives. Q & Groove is known for featuring the next big name in music!

Information and tickets at tennysoncenter.org/events.

Breckenridge Film Festival

Breckenridge, Colorado

Breck Film Festival Celebrates 45 Years, September 18-21, 2025: Known as the "filmmaker's festival" and named a Top 20 Film Festival by USA Today, Breck Film brings independent films, global talent, and award-winning filmmakers to the beautiful Breckenridge autumn leaves.

Information and tickets at breckfilmfest.eventive.org/welcome.

The 39th Annual Carousel Ball

Hyatt Regency Denver | 5:30 p.m.

The highly anticipated Carousel Ball, hosted by the Children's Diabetes Foundation, benefits the Barbara Davis Center for Diabetes and supports type 1 diabetes research. Enjoy hors d'oeuvres and cocktails, auctions, dinner, an engaging program, and a special performance by GRAMMY-nominated rock band Goo Goo Dolls.

Information and tickets at aesbid.org/ELP/CDFCB25.

5280SCENE | SCAN HERE TO VIEW ONLINE

THE OVERSIMPLIFIED GUIDE TO:

Grilling A Steak

If the high price of beef makes you skittish about cooking over fire, should you air-fry your T-bone instead? (Answer: absolutely not.) We chewed the fat with chef Hosea Rosenberg, who operates a restaurant and two butcher shops/delis under the Blackbelly name in Boulder and Denver, to learn how to grill a simply perfect piece of meat, every time. —MARK ANTONATION

1

Pick the right cut for the occasion. Rosenberg says a bone-in, dry-aged rib-eye is "the king of steaks" and worthy of a special dinner, but the less expensive Denver cut (a tender shoulder steak) or bavette can elevate weeknights. Filet mignon is easy to cook, if less flavorful.

2

If you're working with a frozen steak, **thaw it slowly** in the fridge—not under running water—or you'll end up with mushy meat. Whether fresh or defrosted, bring your cut to room temperature an hour or two before cooking.

3

Rub the steak lightly with a neutral oil such as grapeseed; olive oil can burn. Salt moderately an hour before the steak hits the grill or liberally right before. **Cook over charcoal or wood** if you can, but a propane grill with a small pan of wood chips next to your steak works, too. Get your grill hot (at least 500° F).

4

Depending on thickness, **cook one to four minutes per side**, rotating 90 degrees midway through each side for attractive grill marks. Close the lid for thick cuts. Sizzling fat and a mahogany color will tell you when it's done. Or wait until a probe hits 115° to 120° F (lower for thinner cuts, higher for thicker).

5

Resting your steak is crucial, so let it sit for about half the time it took to cook. **Finish with flaked salt, cracked pepper, and compound butter** or flavorful olive oil. For that rib-eye, cut along the bone first, then into slices of equal thickness. Serve with wine—preferably a bold Cabernet.

ILLUSTRATION BY SIMONE MASSONI

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By the way, that's Courtney and her husband in the picture. You can watch her story at **bit.ly/NSO-Courtney.**

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